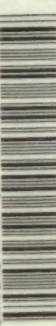


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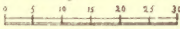
OF

A. E. Hurley

THE GOSPELS.

PALESTINE

Scale of British Miles



AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE GOSPELS

CONSISTING OF

AN ANALYSIS OF EACH CHAPTER

AND OF A

COMMENTARY

CRITICAL, EXEGETICAL, DOCTRINAL, AND MORAL

BY HIS GRACE THE MOST REV. DR. MACDEVILLY
ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED

"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."—MARK xvi. 15, 16.
"And how shall they preach unless they be sent?"—ROM. x. 15.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

A CONSIDERABLE period has now elapsed since I first ventured on laying before the public a Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, and those commonly called Catholic. I resolved at the time to continue these Scriptural subjects with a similar Commentary on the Four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles. Circumstances, however, soon changed; and from the retirement of college life, so well suited for such studies, I found myself unexpectedly charged with varied and multiplied duties of the gravest nature, which it would be criminal to overlook or neglect. I was, in consequence, reluctantly forced to give over, for a time, the almost constant and uninterrupted application which the publication of a Scriptural Commentary would almost exclusively demand. I was determined, however, not to lose sight of my original design of publishing a Commentary on the Gospels; any spare time I had on hands from episcopal or missionary duties, I devoted to this study particularly. The reading over voluminous Commentaries involved no small amount of labour, to me by no means distasteful, as well as the sacrifice of other important studies. The following Commentary on St. Matthew and St. Mark is partly the result. The notes which I made on St. Luke, St. John, and the Acts, are not yet arranged for publication. I trust to be able, in a short time, to publish them in a supplemental volume. It is right to inform, at least some of my readers, that the Commentary on St. Matthew almost fully embraces the two other synoptical Gospels, as they are called, of Mark and Luke. The reader of the Commentary on St. Matthew will be able to perceive that most of the Gospel of St. Luke is included in the Commentary on Matthew and Mark. From St. Matthew's Gospel, St. Luke differs but very little, save as regards the two first chapters in the Gospel of the latter (having reference chiefly to the facts and circumstances connected with the birth and infancy of the Baptist, the birth and infancy of our Blessed Lord), and some few parables not contained in the Gospel of St. Matthew. A large portion of St. John, particularly in what regards our Lord's Passion, has been commented on, by anticipation, in St. Matthew.

The great favour with which the Commentary on the Epistles has been received, as it has already reached a third edition, after having been a considerable time out of print, for want of time to superintend its re-publication, emboldens me to hope, that the Commentary on the Gospels will be received with at least equal favour by the public. It is hoped it may serve to promote the objects for which the Commentary on the Epistles was designed, viz., to furnish the intelligent laity and reading portion of the Catholic community with a thoroughly Catholic exposition, in their own language, of one of the most important portions of the SS. Scriptures—to supply the ecclesiastical student with a compendious treatise from which to draw materials, at a future day, for instructing others, which is by no means the least important of the exalted duties of the sacred ministry—and lastly, to serve as a practical reply to the clumsy calumnies so often refuted, of those who charge the Catholic Church with interdicting, for her own purposes, the reading of the SS. Scriptures, even when such reading is hedged round with the proper safeguards. We cannot meet this stupid charge with

a clearer refutation than by adducing the authoritative words of the successor of St. Peter on this subject—" *Illi enim sunt fontes uberrimi qui cuique patere debent ad hauriendam et morum et doctrinæ sanctitatem, depulsis erroribus qui his corruptis temporibus late disseminantur.*" "For they (viz., the SS. Scriptures), are the most abundant sources, *that ought to be left open to every one*, to draw from them purity of morals and doctrine, to eradicate the errors which are widely disseminated in these corrupt times." (See letter of Pius VI. to Martini, prefixed to Martini's Bible.)

But does not this charge, with which our ears are every day assailed, come with good grace from men who, themselves enjoying singular advantages, have never produced anything in elucidation of the SS. Scriptures, unless it be an occasional indecent article or empty placard, abusive of every attempt on the part of Catholics to supply an acknowledged want? It is not for me to say why the sons of the Irish Establishment are so barren of Scriptural knowledge. But while the fact cannot be gainsaid, that a word of abuse of those who differ from us in religion is never uttered, or permitted to be uttered, from Catholic altar or pulpit in this country, those men who accuse the Catholic Church of withholding the Bible from the people, in many instances, "*fulfil the law,*" by the unmeaning abuse of Catholic doctrine and practices, blaspheming what they understand not, and charitably substitute the grossest misrepresentation, which costs them but little study, for that ecclesiastical and Scriptural knowledge which some of them are too ignorant of, and many too indolent, to acquire. On this subject I may be permitted to quote the words of an exceedingly learned and voluminous commentator on SS. Scripture—" *I believe no Church in the world has done less for the critical study of the Bible than the Irish Establishment.* After a diligent search through all the biographical indexes within my reach (see E. G. Horne's *Introduc.*, last edition, wherein the index is very complete), I cannot find the name of one Irishman, trained and serving in the Anglo-Irish Church, who has published *a comment* on even *one chapter* of the Bible. I do not speak of such men as Bramhall, Bedell, Jeremy Taylor, Jebb,* Mant, Whately, and Trench, educated abroad, and imported here because their services were needed, and Irishmen could not be found to take their places. I speak of the sons of the Irish Establishment, of those brought up under her care, and I say that few, perhaps not even one, of them can be named among *biblical interpreters*. It is evident that the curse of barrenness has blighted the whole life of the Irish Establishment, from its first planting down to the present hour, when the just sentence is at length heard, 'Cut it down, therefore, why cumbereth it the ground.'" (Very Rev. D. MacCarthy, D.D., Vice-President and Professor of SS. Scripture, College, Maynooth, 1868.)

In addition to the foregoing reasons, the character of the age on which we have fallen considerably influenced me in publishing a Commentary on the Gospels at the present time. Was it ever more necessary at any period in the history of Christianity than it is at the present day, to place before the world, in as clear a light as possible, an exposition, in accordance with the unerring teachings of the Catholic Church, of the fundamental principles of faith and morals, with which the Son of God came down to enlighten a world which He found sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death? Does the condition, into which many parts of the world are at this moment relapsing promise to be an improvement on that state of Paganism, in which He found it when He came to proclaim glory to God and peace to men? Has not His spouse and representative, the Catholic Church, with whom He deposited the fulness of truth, and to whom He bequeathed the plenitude of His authority, as fierce a struggle before her, enemies as embittered to encounter, as she had when she was forced to seek shelter

* Not Bishop Jebb, but his uncle Dean Jebb of Cashel.

for a time in the bowels of the earth, and the Flavian Amphitheatre re-echoed to the savage yells of "*Christianos ad leones.*" Are the principles of atheism, materialism, total negation of all future sanction, dimly shadowed forth even in the very fables of Paganism, less deadly or noxious in their consequences, both as regards here and hereafter, than the principles of polytheism she succeeded in utterly extirpating? As regards public authority, was the all-absorbing power of the Pagan rulers more crushing than the iron despotism men would now fain establish, in the most powerful kingdoms, under the specious name of liberty? Liberty—that name, like religion itself, so often injuriously invoked, which can never be found dissociated from the holy influences of God's Spirit, for, "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there (and there only) is liberty*" (2 Cor. iii. 17).

Do we not every day see efforts persistently made, and unjustly enforced, even at the certain risk of anarchy, to render to Cæsar not only what belongs to Cæsar, but also to concentrate in him all rights, human and Divine; to constitute him the sole guardian, depositary, and dispenser of what belongs to God; and this, in defiance of all the principles of true liberty, despite solemn treaties, and in violation of all guaranteed rights of conscience? Does not this all-absorbing power of the State, resting solely on brute force, by an unholy league which embraces both hemispheres, unjustly invade and trample under foot the sacred rights of parents, and force them to bring up their children, who were destined to fill up one day those seats vacated by the fallen angels, in schools where the sacred name of God is utterly banished, and their tender minds indoctrinated in the soul-destroying principles of materialism?

What is this but a persistent attempt at the revival of Paganism, making might, or the law of the strongest, the sole standard of right, and the substitution of brute force for the abiding blessings of moral influences? What is it but a rapid approach to that sad state of spiritual decay, of which our Redeemer Himself forewarns us, "*Think you, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?*" (Luke xviii. 8.)

As the Son of God came down from heaven not only to be our Redeemer, but our teacher; not only to ransom us with the effusion of His precious blood, but to enlighten us with these saving truths, the knowledge of which, joined to firm and unhesitating faith, He has made an indispensable condition of salvation, it must be ever a subject of the deepest spiritual interest to place these truths in as clear a light as possible. Whether the following Commentary may serve to advance this and the other ends referred to, must be left to others to decide.

The *Text* is from the edition published by Duffy (A.D. 1857) with the sanction and approval of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, and lately published by Gill and Son, with the sanction and approval of his Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop of Dublin.

The plan is in every respect similar to that adopted in the Exposition of the Epistles (see Preface to), with the exception of the paraphrase. In the Epistles, which might be regarded as so many closely-reasoned doctrinal dissertations on Christian faith and morals, dealing but little with matters of fact, a paraphrase would be well suited to connect the several sentences, and supply the link, sometimes apparently wanting, in the reasoning of the inspired writers. Whereas, in the Gospels, which are, in general, but a narrative of the actions of our Blessed Lord, as well as of His discourses, recorded in a discursive and disconnected form, a paraphrase would seem to be out of place. It is hoped, however, that the reader will find its absence compensated for by a more ample exposition of the meaning of the several words

and phrases in the Commentary, and by the tracing of the consecutive course of reasoning in the discourses of our Divine Redeemer, and the connexion of the narrative of the Evangelists, whenever practicable.

It is right to inform the readers of the commentators I have followed, and the authorities whose opinions are found reflected in the following work. These are—Jansenius Gandavensis, Maldonatus, Calmet, A. Lapide, Mauduit, Natalis Alexander, Patrizzi (Dissertations, &c.), Barradius, Lucas Burgensis, Jansenius Iprensis, Sylveria, Martini, Kenrick, &c. ; and in Mark, in addition to the foregoing, Patrizzi's Commentary on Mark. On doctrinal points—St. Thomas, Bellarmine, Perrone, Primate Dixon, Professor Murray. Among the Fathers—St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Chrysostom, &c. These several authorities I refrain from quoting on each particular point, save occasionally, as by doing so I would be only breaking up the continuity of the work, and rendering it less attractive to the general reader. But I have taken care to advance no opinion or interpretation, the substance of which is not found in one or more of the learned authorities referred to in the preceding catalogue.

I am far from imagining this work to be, in every respect, what it ought to be. For its many defects and shortcomings I must trust to the kind indulgence of the reader.

I have only to say, in conclusion, that it has been my anxious desire to give faithful expression on every point to the teaching and doctrines of the Holy Roman Catholic Church—the infallible depositary of God's revealed truth. She alone is the *Apostolic See*—the heir of the plenitude of ecclesiastical power, and of the indefectible faith of Peter, whom faith tells us to be the infallible teacher of the universal Church—lambs and sheep, pastors and people—Divinely appointed to teach and confirm his brethren.

✠ JOHN MACVILLY.

GALWAY, April 6, 1876.

PREFACE TO FOURTH EDITION.

The Third Edition of the "Exposition of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark" having been fully exhausted in a comparatively brief period, we feel called upon for a Fourth and New Edition, which we confidently hope may meet with the same amount of public favour so generously accorded to those that preceded it.

The Introduction prefixed to the First Edition, reproduced here, so fully explains the aim and plan of this publication, as to leave nothing to be added.

The price is reduced by nearly one half.

We once more respectfully submit this Fourth Edition to the kind consideration of the public.

✠ JOHN, ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM.

TUAM, *February 9th*, 1898.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

May we hope that this Third Edition of our "Exposition of the Gospels" will receive the same amount of public favour that has been accorded to the preceding Editions.

Their rapid and steady sale in a comparatively brief period of time has exceeded our most sanguine expectations.

This Edition is, in every respect, the same as the preceding, with the exception of a few unimportant verbal corrections.

It is once more submitted to the kind indulgence of the public.

✠ JOHN MACEVILLY,
Archbishop of Tuam.

TUAM, *January 11th*, 1887.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The great favour with which the "Exposition of the Gospels" has been received, —the First Edition having been almost exhausted in less than twelve months— would seem to call for the present Second Edition of the same work, which hardly differs in any respect from the preceding one, save in the careful correction of some unavoidable errors of Press.

The Preface to the First Edition, to which I have nothing further to add, explains in detail the plan and object of the work.

It is once more submitted to the kind indulgence of the reader.

✠ JOHN MACEVILLY.

GALWAY, *July 19*, 1877.

PREFACE TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW.

ST. MATTHEW, the Evangelist, it is generally supposed, was a Galilean by birth. He followed the profession of *publican* or tax-gatherer. As a class, the *publicans* were held in great horror by the Jews, who regarded them as public sinners, on account of their exactions, rapacity, and heartless oppression of the poor. Everywhere in the Gospels, they are referred to by our Divine Redeemer as placed outside the pale of salvation. (See Commentary, p. 167.) St. Matthew held his office or toll-booth at Capharnaum, on the brink of the Lake of Genesareth. His special department was, very probably, the collection of the customs levied on persons and merchandise, that crossed the Lake of Genesareth. It was while he was actually engaged in the duties of his calling, "*sitting in the custom-house*" (ix. 9), our Lord, who came to save sinners, called on him to follow Him. St. Matthew at once obeyed the heavenly call. Leaving all, he attached himself inseparably to the service of his Divine Master. Before, however, taking leave of his friends, and all he held most dear in this world, probably during the interval allowed him to put his worldly affairs in order, he gave our Lord and His disciples a banquet, at his house, to which his former associates flocked in great numbers (ix. 10). From this, the Pharisees took occasion to indulge in their usual carping malignity, in regard to the actions of our Divine Redeemer. But He, on hearing of it, reduces them to silence, and assigns several reasons in justification of His conduct. St. Matthew, also, bore the name of Levi (Mark ii. 14; Luke v. 27). Mark calls him "*Levi, the son of Alphaeus.*" Whence, some modern critics hold that Matthew and Levi were two different persons. But, the common opinion is, that he had both names—a thing by no means uncommon among the Jews. Thus, we have, Simon Peter, John Mark, Paul called Saul, &c. The identity of circumstances recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, both as to time, place, occupation, &c., places the identity of Matthew and Levi beyond all reasonable doubt. It is utterly improbable, and hardly tenable, that two publicans would be called by our Lord, in the same words, at the same time and place, one of whom would become an Apostle, and the other utterly unheard of afterwards.

It is given as a proof of the great humility of the Evangelist, that while Mark and Luke, out of consideration for his feelings, call him "*Levi,*" a name less known in connexion with his former odious course of life; and while they mention him as the host of our Divine Redeemer, he himself speaks of himself as *Matthew, the publican*, and omits all reference to himself as the privileged host of our Divine Lord.

We have no further allusion to St. Matthew in the Gospel. From tradition, we learn that he preached for some years after our Lord's Ascension, in Judea and the neighbouring countries (Eusebius, St. Epiphanius), that after the dispersion of the Apostles, he went to preach the Gospel, some say, to Persia (St. Paulinus); others, to Parthia (St. Ambrose); others, to Ethiopia (Ruffinus and Socrates). As regards his end, whether he died a natural death, or received the crown of martyrdom, on these points, nothing can be determined for certain.

HIS GOSPEL.—There never has been any diversity of opinion regarding the authenticity of this Gospel, among writers, ancient or modern, all of whom ascribe it to St. Matthew, if, perhaps, we except Faustus, the Manichean refuted by St. Augustine (*Lib. contra Faustum*). It has also been universally agreed upon, as we learn from Eusebius (*Lib. iii., Hist. c. 24*), that it was written in Judea, at the earnest request of the converted Jews of Palestine, and at the instance of the other Apostles, before their dispersion, in order that an enduring record of what St. Matthew preached might be preserved, and to supply his personal absence before he went to preach elsewhere. Upon this point, the greatest unanimity prevails among ancient and modern writers. Nor are intrinsic arguments, in proof of this, wanting, derived from the Gospel itself. Everywhere, it abounds with allusions to Jewish customs and usages general and particular, laws, localities, &c., with which the Jews were thoroughly acquainted; also with Hebrew, or rather Syro-Chaldaic words and phrases left unexplained, because well known to his readers; whereas, these same laws, usages, phrases, localities, are explained by the other Evangelists, whose Gospels were intended for a different class of readers, for whom such explanations were necessary.

We have, moreover, frequent prophetic quotations, without the prophet being named, "*Sicut dictum est per Prophetam*," the prophet quoted being, in each instance, well known to those for whom the Gospel was intended.

LANGUAGE OF.—There is hardly any other historical fact, regarding which such unanimity of opinion prevails among the earliest ecclesiastical writers, as that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel originally in Hebrew, or rather Syro-Chaldaic, the vernacular of Judea at the time. During the period of seventy years' captivity at Babylon, the use of the ancient Hebrew had ceased; and after their return, the Jews brought back with them the Chaldaic or Aramaic language. With this they mixed up some Hebrew words. The language commonly in use since their return from captivity till the utter destruction of the Jews, was this language, chiefly composed of the Chaldaic, and partly of the Hebrew; hence, termed Syro-Chaldaic. That this was the language in which St. Matthew wrote his Gospel, is attested by Papias, whose veracity in reference to this fact, as well as his sources of knowledge, are unquestionable (*Iræneus, Hæres. 33*); Iræneus (*Euseb. Hist. Eccles. verse 8*). Pantenus, who, St. Jerome informs us, brought back from Judea, where he went to preach the Gospel, the Hebrew copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, left there by St. Bartholomew, Apostle (*de Viris Ill. 36*); Origen (*apud Euseb. H. E. vi. 25*); St. Epiphanius (*Her. xxix. 9*); St. Jerome, &c., &c.

Having written his Gospel for the use of the converted Jews of Palestine, can it be supposed St. Matthew would employ any other than the language most dear to them, to which they were wedded by so many ties of nationality? (See *Acts xxii. 2*.)

Would the Ebionites and Nazareans have attempted to assert that their own Apocryphal Hebrew Gospel was the primitive text of St. Matthew, if the persuasion did not prevail generally at the time, that St. Matthew wrote in Hebrew? The first objection against this opinion, on the ground that certain Syro-Chaldaic words are explained, proves nothing, as these words probably were explained by the Greek interpreter. Moreover, the author himself might have explained certain remarkable compound words in a simpler form. If the argument proved anything, it would equally militate against the Hebrew origin of the Books of *Genesis xxxi. 18* *Exodus xii. 2*; *1 Kings vii. 42*, &c., where a similar explanation of certain remarkable words is given.

2ndly. It is objected that the quotations are from the Septuagint of the Old Testament. But most of the quotations are only according to the sense of the passages quoted, and this approaches nearer the original Hebrew than the Septuagint.

3rdly. The phraseology in Mark, who confessedly wrote in Greek, is almost identical in many places with St. Matthew.

But, all that would follow from this is, that it was the Greek translator of Matthew that employed certain forms of expression, which were afterwards adopted by Mark.

Although St. Matthew originally wrote in Syro-Chaldaic, it is quite certain, that his Gospel appeared in Greek, at a very early period, and was in common use in the second century. Some maintain that this early Greek copy was an original, emanating from St. Matthew himself, and written by him for the use of the Hellenistic Jews, and the Gentiles aggregated to the Church. Others maintain it was but a translation, made under the direction of St. Matthew himself; but by whom made is uncertain. Some say, by St. Paul; others, by St. Luke; others, by St. James, first Bishop of Jerusalem, for the use chiefly of the Hellenistic Jews, subject to his spiritual jurisdiction. But, whether the Greek copy in question, was an original emanating from St. Matthew, or a translation by whomsoever made, under his direction, it was regarded by the Church as inspired and canonical. In course of time, it came into general use throughout the Church. The Fathers, without exception, quoted from it, without any doubt or misgiving whatever, regarding its canonical authority. Owing to the corruptions made in the Hebrew copies by the Ebionite and Nazarean heretics, the Hebrew version ceased to be of any authority whatever. It was according to the Greek that St. Jerome corrected the Vulgate, by the command of Pope Damasus.

What became of the original Hebrew copy of St. Matthew, cannot be known for certain. By some it is held that it perished, with other Jewish records, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

TIME OF.—It is generally admitted that the Gospel of St. Matthew was written first of all the Books of the New Testament. The precise time cannot be ascertained. It is certain some interval elapsed between it and our Lord's death and resurrection. For, St. Matthew refers to the idle tale regarding our Lord's body having been stolen by His disciples, as existing up to the time he wrote (xxviii. 15); and he speaks of the potter's field purchased with the blood-money flung back by the wretched Judas, being called "Haceldama," up to the time of his writing his Gospel (xxvii. 8). Some refer the date of it to the year 41, eight years after our Lord's Ascension. Others, to a later period. It is universally admitted to have been written before any other Book of the New Testament. Hence, justly entitled to the place it occupies, first in our Bibles.

The chief scope and aim which St. Matthew proposes to himself, clearly is to prove that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah promised to the Jews—the Son of David, predicted by the prophets. On this account it is, he quotes more largely from the Scriptures of the Old Testament in proof of this, than any other of the Evangelists.

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

THE English word, *Gospel*, is of Saxon origin, derived from the Saxon words, *God spell*, which signify *Good news*. Its corresponding word in the Greek, *εὐαγγέλιον*, in Latin, *Evangelium*, bears the same signification. The word, *εὐαγγέλιον*, is employed by classical authors to denote sometimes the reward conferred on the bearer of good news; sometimes, the sacrifice offered in thanksgiving for good tidings. In SS. Scripture, it is employed sometimes to denote the entire doctrine of Christ, "*prædicat Evangelium omni creature*" (Mark xvi. 15), "*qui non obediunt Evangelio, penas dabunt, &c.*" (2 Thess. i. 9); sometimes, the preaching of this doctrine, "*Cujus laus est in Evangelio*" (2 Cor. viii. 18). Here, it denotes good news, or tidings, the most joyful ever communicated to the human race, embracing the entire economy of Redemption through Christ. By a metonymy, the word signifies the history of that good news. As sanctioned by Ecclesiastical usage, it may be described to be "the history of the coming of Christ on earth, of His Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, which history the Catholic Church declares to have been written under the inspiration of God's Spirit." The declaration of the Church is the Seal that authenticates the inspired character of this history. Without it St. Augustine would not have received the Gospel. "*Ego Evangelio non crederem nisi me Ecclesiæ Catholicæ commoveret auctoritas.*" (Lib. Contra. Epist. Manichi quam vocant fundamenti, Tom. viii., c. 5.)

This Gospel is "Holy" in its object and Author, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is holiness itself; in its subject—The life and actions of our Lord; in its end—the sanctification of the world.

It is said to be "according to Matthew," as recorded by St. Matthew. It by no means implies that a different subject is treated of by all the Evangelists, but only that, while the history of our Lord's life and actions is given substantially the same by all, the following is the form in which it is recorded by St. Matthew.

It seems nearly certain, and is almost universally admitted, that the titles prefixed in our Bibles to the Gospels, "THE HOLY GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MATTHEW," or "MARK," &c., were not written by the Evangelists themselves. For, there is a great difference between the titles given in some versions and editions and those given in others. In some, they are rather short; in others, very long. Their perfect identity of expression in all the Gospels, with the exception of the Evangelist's name, in each case, would go far to prove the same, as the Evangelists rarely employ identical expressions. Moreover, St. Mark commences his Gospel with the words, "*The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God,*" which clearly shows he prefixed no other heading, such as is found in our Bibles. It was not customary with Hebrew writers to give a leading title, save in the text itself. No doubt, from the very beginning the Gospel of each Evangelist was authenticated by the Church

as the work distinctly bearing the name of each. Hence, amongst the charges brought by Tertullian against Marcion (Lib. 4, *Contra Marcion*), he accuses him of using a Gospel which did not bear the author's name.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter the Evangelist gives the pedigree of our Blessed Lord, which he divides into three series, comprising fourteen generations each. The first series commencing with Abraham and ending with David (vv. 1-6), is composed partly of his patriarchal ancestors, but chiefly of those who exercised the office of Judges among the Jewish people. The second commencing with David, who is repeated as the head of this series, and ending with the Babylonish captivity (7-11), embraces our Redeemer's kingly ancestors. The third commencing with the deportation of the people to Babylon, after which all independent kingly authority ceased among the Jews, and ending with our Lord, embraces mostly His dual ancestors. We have next the history of our Lord's miraculous conception—the Virgin's pregnancy—the perplexity which it occasioned Joseph, from whom the mysterious operation of the Holy Ghost was hitherto kept secret (18-19)—the consoling assurances of the angel sent to dispel his doubts and calm his apprehensions (20-21)—the Prophecy of Isaiah relating to this wonderful conception by a virgin (22-23)—the unhesitating obedience of Joseph (24-25).

TEXT.

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham :

2. *Abraham begot Isaac. And Isaac begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Judas and his brethren.*
3. *And Judas begot Phares and Zara of Thamar. And Phares begot Esron. And Esron begot Aram.*
4. *And Aram begot Aminadab. And Aminadab begot Naasson. And Naasson begot Salmon.*
5. *And Salmon begot Booz of Rahab. And Booz begot Obed of Ruth. And Obed begot Jesse.*
6. *And Jesse begot David the king. And David the king begot Solomon, of her that had been the wife of Urias.*
7. *And Solomon begot Roboam. And Roboam begot Abia. And Abia begot Asa.*
8. *And Asa begot Josaphat. And Josaphat begot Joram. And Joram begot Ozias.*
9. *And Ozias begot Joatham. And Joatham begot Achaz. And Achaz begot Ezechias.*
10. *And Ezechias begot Manasses. And Manasses begot Amon. And Amon begot Josias.*
11. *And Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren in the transmigration of Babylon.*
12. *And after the transmigration of Babylon, Jechonias begot Salathiel. And Salathiel begot Zorobabel.*
13. *And Zorobabel begot Abiud. And Abiud begot Eliacim. And Eliacim begot Azor.*
14. *And Azor begot Sadoc. And Sadoc begot Achim. And Achim begot Eliud.*
15. *And Eliud begot Eleazar. And Eleazar begot Mathan. And Mathan begot Jacob.*
16. *And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*
17. *So all the generations from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations. And from David to the transmigration of Babylon, are fourteen generations ; and from the transmigration of Babylon to Christ are fourteen generations.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*The book.*" This word in its general acceptation with the Hebrews, means a writing of any kind. Here, it signifies a narrative or catalogue "*of the generation*" that, is to say, of the genealogy or ancestors "*of Jesus Christ.*" In this sense it holds the

place of Preface or Title to this first chapter. The Hebrew word, *Sepher*, corresponding to the Greek, *Βιβλίος*, denotes any writing or narrative. As Moses speaking of the *first* Adam says (Genesis v. 1.), "*This is the book of the generation of Adam*," so St. Matthew here employs the same form of language in reference to Christ to convey that He is the *second* Adam, "*the Father of the world to come*" (Isaiah ix. 6); the principle of a second birth more happy and of a more exalted character than that which was derived from the first, who was a type of Christ (Rom. v. 14; 1 Cor. xv.) Maldonatus is of opinion that the words form the title of the *entire Gospel*. According to him "*generation*" refers not only to the descent, but also to the entire life and actions of Christ as recorded in this Gospel. His opinion is improbable; the words mean, the record or roll of the pedigree of our Lord.

"*Of Jesus Christ.*" "*Jesus*," derived from a Hebrew word signifying "*to save*" (see v. 21), is the proper name of the Man-God, and denotes his Person and Divinity. "*Christ*," derived from a Greek word signifying "*to anoint*" denotes his office as Prophet, Priest, and King, all of whom were anointed with oil on entering on the peculiar and sacred functions of their office. Our Lord was *anointed* in virtue of the Hypostatic union, which was a spiritual and essential unction, whereby He was set apart as Prophet, Priest, and King. This was *the oil of gladness wherewith He was anointed* (Heb. i. 9). In thus referring to the name and office of the Son of God, St. Matthew wishes to arrest the attention of the Jews by conveying to them that he is about giving the history of their long-expected *Messiah*, which means the *Anointed*.

"*The Son*," that is, the descendant. The Hebrews designated by the name of "*son*" every one descended from another, no matter how remotely, in a direct line.

"*Of David, the son of Abraham.*" These two are mentioned because to them were made the promise in a special way that Christ would be born of them; of *Abraham*, as head of the race; of *David*, as head of the family. *David* is placed first for brevity sake, otherwise the construction should run thus: "*The son of Abraham, who was the father of David, from whom Christ was descended*" (St. Jerome). Others assign as a reason for this construction that the promises made to David regarding Christ were more recent, and of a more special character, being made, not alone to the Jewish race, but to the family of David. Hence, the Jewish people, including the very babes and sucklings, everywhere style the Messiah as "*the son of David*" (Matt. xxi. 15; John vii. 42, &c.), pointing to his royal dignity as heir to the throne of David on which He was to sit for ever, "*and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of David, His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end*" (Luke i. 32). Hence the Prophets everywhere speak of our Lord, as *Son of David*. In truth, the *Son of David*, was one of the characteristic names of our Lord. (Isa. ix. 7; Jer. xxiii. 5; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Amos ix. 11). The promise first made to David on this head is recorded (2 Kings vii. 12, &c.), confirmed (Psa. lxxxviii. 131), and renewed to Solomon (3 Kings ix. 5). St. Matthew wishes to convey that all these promises were fulfilled in Christ.

"*The son of Abraham*" may either refer to David, who was the descendant of Abraham, or to Christ, who was the son of David *and* of Abraham. In this latter construction the conjunction, *and*, is understood. To Abraham and David both were made promises regarding Him. The former construction is preferred by many, inasmuch as it followed, as a matter of course, in the minds of all the Jews, that being the son of David, He should also be a son of Abraham.

From the birth of Abraham to that of Christ there elapsed an interval of about 2004 years; and from the death of David to Christ, a period of 1013 years.

St. Matthew studiously traces the genealogy of Christ to Abraham through a

successive series of *forty-two*, with the view of convincing the Jews that He was their true Messiah, whom they should, therefore, honour and worship. In St. Luke, whose Gospel was written for the use of the Gentiles, our Lord's pedigree is traced up to Adam, the father of the whole human race. The Gospel of St. Matthew being written for the Jews, the genealogy commences with Abraham, whom the Jews called their father.

2. "*Abraham begot Isaac.*" Writing for the Jews, St. Matthew commences the genealogy of Christ with Abraham, in whom they gloried as their father, the founder of their race, to whom they were wont to trace up their genealogies. He was, moreover, the first, after Adam, to whom a promise was made that Christ was to be of his seed. St. Luke's Gospel being written for the use of the Gentiles, the pedigree of our Lord is traced up to Adam, the father of the entire human race, "*Isaac*" alone mentioned out of all the other sons of Abraham, as it was of him Christ was born. *But in Isaac shall thy seed be called* (Gen. xxi. 12; Rom. ix. 7).

"*Judas and his brethren.*" The brethren of Judas are mentioned, while no similar mention is made of the brethren of Isaac and Jacob; because the Jewish people, whom St. Matthew addresses, were descended from the twelve sons of Jacob, the eleven others as well as Judah, their descendants constituting one and the same people, of whom Christ was born. These were the twelve pillars of the Jewish people and of the kingdom of Christ.

3. "*Of Tamar.*" It is remarked by commentators that all the women mentioned in the genealogy of our Lord were, with the exception of His Immaculate Mother, publicly subject to reproach. One of them being guilty of adultery—Bethsabee; another of incest—Tamar; another, a harlot—Rahab; and the fourth a Gentile—Ruth. Rahab, too, was a Gentile, a native of Jericho. The reason commonly assigned for this is, that being united to their husbands out of the ordinary way, and owing to an unusual combination of circumstances, these women presented a very expressive type of the sinful Gentiles, who were aggregated to the people and Church of God through a new vocation, after the Jews had been rejected. Other reasons are assigned, viz., that our Lord, having come to save sinners, deigned to have among His ancestors some who were very expressive types of those whom He came to save (St. Jerome). Again, the Evangelist wished to humble the pride of the Jews, by reminding them of the gross sins of their Patriarchs in whom they were wont to glory so much (St. Chrysostom). The first reason seems the more probable. Jacob's incestuous connexion with Tamar is recorded (Gen. xxxviii). "*Phares and Zara,*" being twin brothers, are both mentioned, as presenting in the circumstances of their birth an expressive type of the Jews and Gentiles, the mystery of whose vocation is referred to by the Apostle (Rom. xi. 25). The same figure was expressed in the birth of Jacob and Esau; but as this latter did not belong to the people of God, having sold his birthright, and thus a type of the reprobate, all mention of him here was, therefore, omitted by the Evangelist.

4. "*Aminadab.*" Lyranus referring to a Jewish tradition, states that this Aminadab was the leader of the tribe of Juda on the egress of the Hebrews from Egypt; the first also to lead the way and to enter into the Red Sea, which miraculously opened a passage for the Israelites. To him the words refer (Cant. vi. 1)—"*My soul troubled me for the chariots of Aminadab.*" He was succeeded by his son Naasson, in the desert.

5. "*Rahab*." Being one time a harlot, afterwards became converted (Heb. xi. 31). She was a native of Jericho. In consequence of her humanity in concealing the Hebrew explorers, she was saved with her whole house and kindred, and associated with the people of God (Josue vi. 25).

"*Ruth*," a native of Moab. Our blessed Lord, who came to save all, Jews and Gentiles, deigned, in order to inspire all with confidence in His mercy, and with hopes of forgiveness, to count among His ancestors Gentiles as well as Jews; and it is with this view the Holy Ghost moves the Evangelist to record this fact.

"*Booz begot Obed*." Some commentators are of opinion that some generations are omitted here, that the *Booz* referred to here was not the immediate father of *Obed*, because between Salmon and Jesse inclusively, only four generations existed, and between them a period of 366 years elapsed, too long a period for four generations to extend over. However, this argument proves nothing, the age of man, for several reasons, being then far greater than at any future period. (Natalis Alexander, Calmet, &c.)

"*Jesse*." Reference is made to him in the prophecy of Isaias, which regards our Redeemer, "*egredietur virga de radice Jesse*" (Isa. xi. 1). He was also called, *Isai*. He was not held in any great consideration among the Jews. Hence, Saul scornfully calls David "*the son of Isai*" (1 Kings xx. 27).

6. "*David the King*"—the first king among the ancestors of Christ. To him was made the promise of a perpetual kingdom. Our Lord's Royal dignity is here indicated, as He was heir to "*the throne of David his father*" (Luke i. 32).

"*That had been (the wife) of Urias*." This recalls the memory of David's sin, and at the same time conveys that God, far from having, in consequence, rescinded His promises to David, had, on the contrary, fulfilled them in her seed, who was his accomplice in guilt. "*That had been of Urias*" conveys that, having ceased to be Urias's wife, she was married to David at the time of Solomon's birth, who was, therefore, the issue of lawful wedlock.

8. "*And Joram begot Ozias*." From the history, or rather from all the catalogues of the kings of Juda in succession (1 Par. iii. 11, &c.), it is quite certain that three kings who reigned in immediate succession are here passed over by the Evangelist. For, Joram begot Ochozias; Ochozias begot Joas; Joas begot Amasias; who begot Ozias referred to here, also called Azarias. So that Ozias, or Azarias, was not immediately the son, but rather the great grandson of Joram, said to be begotten of him in accordance with the Jewish custom of designating by the name of son even the remote offspring of a man in a direct line, just as Christ is said to be "*the son of David and of Abraham*." Why these three generations were passed over is variously accounted for. It surely could not be on account of their great wickedness. Two of them, Joas and Amasias, were reputed good kings; and Solomon and Manasses, who are mentioned in the genealogy, were worse than even Ochozias. The reason generally assigned by commentators following St. Jerome is, that the Evangelist, having in view, for some mysterious reason of his own, to divide the genealogy of our Lord into three classes, consisting of fourteen generations each (v. 17), passed over these three rather than others, on account of the malediction pronounced by God, through the mouth of the prophet Elias, on the house of Achab (3 Kings xxi. 21; 4 Kings ix. 8), viz., that He would utterly destroy his posterity. Hence, as Joram had married Athalia, the daughter of Achab, his descendants to the fourth generation were expunged by the Evangelist from the catalogue of the ancestors of Christ.

Very likely, these names were expunged from the public records St. Matthew had before him. The reason of this omission was, no doubt, understood by those to whom St. Matthew wrote; nor would such omission interfere with the truth of the history. They were not naturally, but civilly, destroyed by such exclusion; just as the tribe of Dan, on account of its wickedness and forbidden commerce with the idolatrous Gentiles, is excluded from the catalogue of the saints numbered out of the tribes of Israel (Apoc. vii. 5-8). No more of those lineally descended from Achab are excluded by the Evangelist, as the malediction of God on the children for their parents' crimes does not usually, according to the measure of the Law, extend beyond the *fourth generation* (Exod. xx. 5). Athalia, the mother of Ochozias, is called the daughter of Amri, king of Israel (4 Kings viii. 26), although only his grand-daughter, in accordance with the Jewish usage already referred to. From other parts of Scripture it is clear that Joram was married to Achab's daughter (4 Kings viii. 18). It was on account of Ochozias being descended from Achab that Jehu slew him (4 Kings ix. 27, &c.), in obedience to the Divine command on the subject (4 Kings ix. 7). The omission of these three generations does not much affect the design of the Evangelist, which was to show that Christ was descended from David. He would be equally the son of David whether these generations were expressed or omitted.

11. "*Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren.*" This verse presents some difficulties—1st, because of the four sons of Josias mentioned (1 Par. iii. 15; 4 Kings xxii. 30, 31), viz., *Johanan, the first-born; the second, Joakim; the third, Sedecias; the fourth, Sellum*," there is none called *Jechonias*; and Jechonias, the father of Salathiel, had no *brethren*; he had but *one* brother, Sedecias. There would also seem to be wanting, as the text stands, some one generation of the *thrice fourteen* (v. 17), in either the second or third of the series. The question is, in case there be an omission of one generation, to which series, second, or third, is the omission to be referred.

Various solutions have been given by commentators to these difficulties. It is held by many commentators that the "*Jechonias*" mentioned in the text is the same as *Joakim, the second son of Josias*, who was appointed king after Joachaz, by Pharaoh Nechao, king of Egypt. (4 Kings xxiii. 34; St. Ambrose, in Lucam; St. Jerome, in Matth.; Irenæus Lib. Hor. iii., &c.) After Josias was slain at Mageddo (4 Kings xxiv.), his son Sellum, reckoned as his *fourth* son, although Sedecias was younger, mounted the throne immediately under the name of Joachaz, as appears from Jeremiah (xxii. 11), where, writing at the time that Joachim, the successor of Joachaz, was reigning, the Prophet says—"Thus saith the Lord to Sellum, son of Josias, king of Juda, who reigneth instead of his father . . . in the place to which I have removed him, there shall he die," &c. Sellum, who went by the name of Joachaz, also died in Egypt, whither Pharaoh Nechao transported him. (4 Kings xxiv.)

Sellum is placed last, or "*the fourth*" among the sons of Josias (1 Par. iii. 15), on account of the short duration of his reign, which lasted only three months. He was succeeded by Joachim, who reigned eleven years. Joachim was succeeded, though not immediately, by his brother Sedecias, who is reckoned as the "*third*" son of Josias, although, in point of years, the youngest. That he was younger than Sellum is clear from this, viz., that Sellum was twenty-three years when he began to reign (4 Kings xxiv. 31); and after an interval of more than eleven years, during which the reign of Joachim lasted, Sedecias, on mounting the throne, was only twenty-one years (xxiv. 18). That Sellum or Joachaz was also younger than Joachim is also clear, as the latter was twenty-five years after the deposition of Joachaz, who was only twenty-three years and three months before (xxiii. 31). Hence, Joachaz is not to

be confounded with Johanan, the *first-born* of Josias, who, it is generally supposed, either died before his father, or from some cause or other never ascended the throne. The advocates of the exposition now given, say that this Joachim is the Jechonias here referred to by St. Matthew, "*Jechonias and his brethren*." These expositions supply the omission of one generation, which, it is generally admitted, occurs here, thus: "*And Jechonias begot Jechonias, and Jechonias begot Salathiel*." So that the Jechonias who is said to have begotten Salathiel in the text (v. 12), is not the *son*, but the grandson of Josias.

There is, however, no evidence in Scripture that Joakim, the second son of Josias ever bore the name of Jechonias. Hence, Maldonatus rejecting the former solution, hazards a conjecture of his own. Setting out with the general admission, that there has been some error, or rather omission in this passage, arising from the transcription of copyists, he says the omission should be supplied in a manner most in accordance with the truthful catalogue of the ancestors of our Lord given in the Old Testament; and, consequently, he supplies it in this way: "*Josias begot Joakim and his brethren, and Joakim begot Joachin, also called Jechonias*" (1 Par. iii. 16; Jer. xxiv. 1); and Jechonias begot Salathiel (v. 12).

Others adopt different other hypotheses. Patrizzi adopts the opinion of Harduin, who maintains that by the Jechonias first referred to, "*Jechonias and his brethren*" is meant *Johanan*, the first-born of Josias, who is supposed by almost all other expositors never to have ascended the throne. It is hard to say which of the suppositions is the more probable solution of the difficulty. As regards the first solution already given, it might be conjectured that as *Joachin*, the son of Joachim, was called *Jechonias*, so might Joachim himself have borne the same name which might be common to both. This, however, is merely conjectural (see v. 17).

There is also much diversity of opinion in explaining in which of the series, second or third, one generation of the *thrice fourteen* (v. 17) is wanting. Those who hold that it is wanting in the *second* series, maintain that *Jechonias* mentioned in v. 12 as father of *Salathiel*, commences the *third* series. Hence, the second commencing with Solomon and ending with Josias inclusively, contains only *thirteen* generations. Those who say it is wanting in the *third* series, maintain that Jechonias, father of Salathiel, belongs to the second series; and they prefer this arrangement, because, according to their ideas, St. Matthew, in dividing our Redeemer's lineage into *thrice fourteen* generations, had in view to note the threefold condition of the Jewish people under judges, who chiefly constituted the first series; under kings, who constituted the second; and dukes, who constituted the third. Hence, Jechonias and his brethren, kings of Juda, should be ranked in the *second* series. But, it may be said in reply, that the three sons of Josias who reigned, were only the mere creatures of the kings of Egypt and Babylon, who made and unmade them at pleasure; and hence they could hardly be said to reign at all. Moreover, all who belong to any one of the three series, need not be necessarily of the same denomination. In the first series, were found men who were not judges, Abraham, Isaac, &c.

Others maintain, that even taking the text as it stands, without supposing any error whatever on the part of copyists, still fourteen generations (the word "generation" meaning the persons, or ancestors of Christ, of whom a catalogue is now given) may be reckoned. Of these expositors some, among whom is Harduin, say that David, who closes the first series, is to be twice repeated, as is indicated in v. 17. For, he is made as much the *head* of the *second* series, although closing the first, as Abraham is of the *first*; while, as regards the close of the second series, what is repeated is not Jechonias, but "*the Babylonish captivity*." Hence Jechonias should

be reckoned in the third series. Others say, with St. Augustine (de cons. Evangel.), that Jechonias, and not David, should be repeated twice, as ending the *second*, and commencing the *third* series, which closes with our Lord.

"*In the transmigration of Babylon.*" "In" means, *about*, or, *on the eve of*, because Josias was dead some years before the Jewish people were carried away captive to Babylon; "transmigration" means *carried away captive*. There was a threefold transmigration (Jer. lii. 28-30; 4 Kings xxv.); the *first*, under Joachim, the son of Josias, in the beginning of Nabuchodonosor's reign; the *second*, under Joachin, son of Joachim, in the eighteenth year of Nabuchodonosor's reign; the *third*, under Sedecias, in the twenty-third year of Nabuchodonosor. This last deportation, which included almost the whole people, was effected by Nabuzardan, the general of Nabuchodonosor.

Patrizzi (De Genere Christ. Dissert. ix.) maintains that the words, "*in the transmigration of Babylon*," are not to be connected with the word "*begot*," since Josias was dead before the transmigration or deportation of the Jews to Babylon, which occurred in the reign of his sons; but that there is an ellipsis in the passage, the word *τῶν* ("*those who were*") being omitted. Hence, the words mean, "*Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren (those who were), in the transmigration of Babylon.*" The *captivity* is by no means to be confounded with the *transmigration*. For, St. Matthew says, "*after the transmigration*," which, surely, cannot mean the term of seventy years' *captivity* (Jer. xxv. 11; Dan. ix. 2), since it was *during* the captivity, and not *after* it, "*Jechonias begot Salathiel*," when the triple deportation of the people to Babylon had been completed. "*The transmigration*," or carrying away, which embraces the triple "*transmigration*," is referred to as a remarkable epoch in Jewish history to close the *second* series with. Under the sons of Josias, the carrying away began and was completed. Not so the period of captivity embracing seventy years, during which some of those belonging to the *third* series were born.

12. "*After the transmigration of Babylon*" was completed, and during the seventy years' *captivity*, or of their detention at Babylon.

"*Jechonias begot Salathiel.*" This, most likely, happened after the death of Nabuchodonosor, when his son, Evilmerodach, ascending the throne, brought forth Jechonias from prison and bestowed on him kingly honours (4 Kings xxv. 27; Jer. lii. 31). Had he a son at the time of his captivity, Nabuchodonosor would have appointed this son, rather than his uncle, Sedecias, to succeed him on the throne. It was, therefore, during the captivity he begot *Salathiel*. The curse of sterility pronounced by God against Jechonias (Jer. xxii. 30) had only reference to the exclusion of his children from "*the throne of David*" (Jer. xxii. 30). For, reference is made in v. 28 to his seed, who "*would be cast on a land they knew not.*" While after his captivity his uncle, Sedecias, reigned in his stead, none of his sons, *Salathiel* and *Asir* (1 Par. iii. 17) ever saw the land of Juda. Under Zorobabel, his grandson, the Jews returned to their country.

The promise regarding our Lord sitting on the throne of David had reference only to His spiritual kingdom, of which there was to be no end.

"*Salathiel begot Zorobabel.*" In 1 Par. (iii. 19) it is said, "*Of Phadaia were born Zorobabel and Semei.*" It is most probable that the Zorobabel spoken of by St. Matthew is a different person altogether from him of whom there is mention in Paralipomenon. For, the list of the posterity of both is quite different in St. Matthew and Paralipomenon. St. Matthew describes *Abiud* as the son of Zorobabel; in Paralipomenon, there is no mention whatever of him. Hence, there is no contradiction

between St. Matthew and Paralipomenon; since in the catalogue furnished by the writer in this latter book there is no mention whatsoever made of the sons of Zorobabel, Abiud or Reza, spoken of in the catalogue of St. Matthew here and Luke (c. iii. 27).

16. "*Who is called*," which, by a Hebrew idiom, signifies, who is in reality "Christ," that is, the Anointed, or the Messiah. As an exposition of the interpretations and hypotheses advanced for the purpose of explaining the apparent discrepancies between the genealogies of our Lord given here by St. Matthew and by Luke (c. iii. 23-38), might render inconveniently diffusive the commentary on this chapter, already sufficiently protracted on other points, we shall content ourselves here with merely noting the chief interpretations on this subject, reserving a fuller exposition for the commentary on Luke, c. iii. It may not be amiss here to observe, that whatever may be the difficulties to be found in any of the leading opinions at this remote period of time (and they are very great, whichever hypothesis we adopt), a strong extrinsic proof of the genuineness of both genealogies is found in the fact, that the genealogies of Matthew and Luke have never been objected to by the Jews of their day, whether believers or unbelievers, who had every opportunity of knowing the state of the case, and many of whom would gladly charge the Evangelists with inaccuracy or inconsistency, if such really existed. And this proof is the more convincing, if it be borne in mind, that the Jews were always remarkable for paying the greatest attention to genealogies, particularly where there was question of direct descent from the most illustrious of their ancestors; and moreover, that they would naturally watch with jealous care, that no mistake should occur, and no false allegation be allowed to pass unchallenged, in the case of the ancestors of the Messiah especially, and of His descent from David, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, to whom the promises regarding Him were made. Notwithstanding this strong extrinsic argument, there have not been wanting at all periods of the Church, from Celsus, in the second century, to Strauss in our own day, enemies of the Christian name, to urge the inaccuracy or inconsistency of the two genealogies, as an objection to the veracity or inspiration of the New Testament. If it were not a matter perfectly certain at the time, that by tracing the genealogy of Joseph, St. Matthew at the same time gave the genealogy of the Blessed Virgin, the Jews, for whom he wrote, and who had before them the genealogical tables, since lost, which would clearly show Joseph and Mary to be of the same tribe and closely united in the same family, would certainly have urged as an objection that he promised to give the genealogy of Jesus Christ, from Abraham and David, and only gave that of Joseph, whom, in the very passage, he declares not to be the father of Jesus Christ. This would clearly show Joseph and Mary to be of the same tribe and family, and that by giving the genealogy of Joseph, the Evangelist gave that of Mary also, the only earthly parent of Jesus Christ. The Evangelist's reason for giving the genealogy of Joseph, rather than that of Mary, is found in the fact, that it was not usual among the Jews to trace genealogies through the female line (St. Jerome). Even in the case of Judith, it is given through the male line (Judith viii. 1), and St. Matthew writing for the Jews would naturally conform to their custom. Moreover, among the Jews, the genealogy of the mother was not considered the true one, but only that of the father. Now, St. Joseph passed externally for the father of Jesus Christ; and if Joseph was not shown to be of the house of David, the *unbelieving* Jews (for St. Matthew wrote for the Jewish people, believers and unbelievers) would regard the account of our Saviour's miraculous conception, as a mere fabrication, and would maintain that Christ was not descended from

David, and, therefore, had no claims to be considered the promised Messiah. Now, the above probable hypothesis, which explains the reticence of the Jews, utterly unaccountable, save in the supposition, that by giving the pedigree of Joseph, St. Matthew gave that of Mary also, receives confirmation from the fact that the Blessed Virgin would appear to have no brothers. For, neither in tradition nor in SS. Scripture do we find mention of any such near connexions of our Lord, as we should naturally expect if they existed, the more so, as we have reference made to the immediate female relative of the Blessed Virgin (John xix. 25). This again leads us to believe that the Blessed Virgin was an heiress; for, contrary to what was customary in the case of women, she went to Bethlehem with St. Joseph to be registered (Luke ii. 5). She must, therefore, have an inheritance, and should, consequently, in accordance with the Jewish law, (Num. xxxvii. 8) marry a kinsman, in order that the inheritance should not pass out of the tribe or family. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin must, therefore, be of the same family; and by giving the genealogy of St. Joseph, St. Matthew gives that of the Blessed Virgin also.

The difficulty, however, still remains, regarding the two genealogies, between which there are but few points of agreement. One traces our Lord's descent downwards from Abraham; the other, upwards to Adam. The number of generations in St. Luke is 77; in St. Matthew, 42. They are even far greater in the former than in the latter from the point of contact in David. The one mentions Jacob, as the father of Joseph; the other Heli, &c., &c. Both would seem to give the genealogy of Joseph; but as this could not by any means regard *natural* descent; hence, various interpretations are advanced to reconcile their apparent discrepancy. There are two leading interpretations, considered the most probable. According to the *first*, St. Matthew gives the *natural* genealogy of St. Joseph; St. Luke, that of the Blessed Virgin. In this interpretation, when St. Luke speaks of Joseph as *the son* of Heli (τοῦ Ηελι), he means the *son-in-law*, married to the Blessed Virgin, the daughter of Heli, who must, therefore, be identified with *Jochim*, whom tradition represents as the father of the Blessed Virgin. This would easily account for the difference of numbers of generations in both. This interpretation, however, has against it, its *novelty*; it was unknown until the fifteenth century, and whatever may be said in regard to a few of the Fathers cited in favour of it (Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, and Athanasius), it cannot be questioned that the weight of authority is in favour of the leading interpretation to be referred to, in the second place. It moreover traces our Lord's pedigree to Nathan, and not to Solomon, to whose family the promises were made (2 Kings vii. 12-16). Again, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph being most probably nearly related by the *father's* side (since the Evangelist could not attain his object with the Jews in giving any other than the *paternal* genealogy), they would surely coincide before reaching the third or fourth generation, and it is hard to conceive how so wide a divergence as that given in the gospels could exist between them. Again, the grammatical construction in St. Luke's Gospel would be fatal to this interpretation, and the insertion of a parenthesis, besides being arbitrary and dangerous in principle, when there is question of interpreting the Word of God, would not much mend matters. Finally, the Virgin's name is not at all introduced by St. Luke, who professes to give the genealogy of our Lord through St. Joseph.

In the second interpretation, it is maintained that in both Matthew and Luke we have the genealogy of St. Joseph—as, indeed, the words of the text itself expressly state—in the former, his *natural*; in the latter, his *legal* genealogy. This legal relationship arose under the *Levirate* law, resulting from a peculiar enactment of the law of Moses (Deut. xxv. 5) “*When brethren dwell together, and one of them dieth without*

children . . . his brother shall take her and raise up seed to his brother : and the first son he shall have of her, he shall call by his name, that his name be not abolished out of Israel." The application of this law to the case of Joseph is founded on the authority of Julius Africanus, who lived in the third century, and says he had it from the relations of our Lord himself. His statement is this : *Estha*, the mother of Heli and Jacob, was married successively to Mathan and Melchi ; of the former, she begat Jacob ; of the latter, Heli. Jacob and Heli were, therefore, *uterine* brothers, having the same mother, but not the same father (Eusebius Hist. Eccles. Lib. 7). Now, Heli having died childless, Jacob married his widow, and had for issue, Joseph, who was the *natural* son of Jacob, but the *legal* son of Heli. As Mathan and Melchi, to whom *Estha* was successively married, need not be at all related, it is no wonder that the two genealogies branch off very divergently without meeting again save in Zorobabel and Salathiel, till they reach David, through Solomon on the one side, and Nathan on the other. This interpretation is commonly adopted by the Fathers. As both genealogies, the *natural* and *legal*, were regarded of the greatest importance among the Jews, it is no wonder the Evangelists give both. The interpretation of Africanus, however, as it stands, unless there be some error in transcription by copyists, does not well accord with the text of St. Luke, in which Heli is given, not as son of Melchi, who is two generations in advance, but of Mathat. But be the difficulties in removing the discrepancies in both genealogies what they may, at this remote period, the Jews, who had the best means of knowing accurately the date of the case, saw none ; otherwise, they would have at once objected, which is a clear proof that no such discrepancy really existed.

17. If we begin by counting Abraham, and end with Christ, we have but 41 generations ; hence, apparently, a name must be repeated or supplied to make up the three fourteens, or 42. By putting David at the end of the *first* series and beginning of the *second*, we shall have : Abraham, 1—David, 14 ; David, 1—Josias, 14 ; Jechonias, 1—Christ, 14. The repetition of David's name is suggested by the Evangelist himself : "*From Abraham to David . . . From David to the transmigration,*" &c., making David the head of the *second* fourteen, and therefore to be counted as much as Abraham is of the first. There were in *reality* more than three fourteens, but for some mysterious reason of his own, St. Matthew, who omitted some generations (see v. 8), wishes to divide the entire into *three fourteens*, according to the catalogue of names expressed by himself. Many Catholic and Protestant writers, and among the rest Harduin, who is a great authority in chronological matters, adopt this mode of computation. If we suppose a generation omitted, then a different division is made : Abraham, 1—David 14 ; Solomon, 1—Joachim, 14 ; Jechonias, 1—Christ, 14.

TEXT.

18. *Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost.*

19. *Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately.*

20. *But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying : Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.*

21. *And she shall bring forth a son : and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.*

22. *Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying :*

23. *"Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name, Emmanuel," which being interpreted is, "God with us."*

24. *And Joseph rising from sleep, did as the Angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife.*

25. *And he knew her not till she brought forth her first-born son : and he called his name Jesus.*

COMMENTARY

18. "*Now, the generation of Christ was this.*" After having shown that our Lord was of the seed of David, the Evangelist, to prevent any misconception regarding the manner of His birth, to which the mention of Joseph, as husband of Mary, and the seed born of her might give rise, now proceeds to show that His birth took place in a way quite different from that of all other children. The Greek word for "generation," γένεσις, means "*the birth*," hence the words mean, "the birth of Christ took place in the following new and unheard of manner."

"*Espoused*," is generally understood by the Fathers to mean, *married*, delivered over to him as wife to a husband, and not merely engaged. He is called her "*husband*" (vv. 16-19), and she his "*wife*" (v. 20). The Greek word bears the signification of being married (Luke ii. 5). It is, moreover, observed that if the Blessed Virgin was merely engaged to Joseph, and exhibited signs of pregnancy while living apart in her father's house, the Almighty would have hardly sufficiently consulted, humanly speaking, for her character or life which, in these circumstances, would be forfeited to the law, and this is commonly assigned as one of the chief reasons why the Blessed Virgin was engaged in marriage at all. Patrizzi, however (Lib. iii., Dissert. xv. de Som. Joseph), maintains, that at the time of his dream (v. 20) Joseph was not married, but only betrothed to the Blessed Virgin. His reasons are :—

1. If married, Joseph would surely have accompanied her on her visit to St. Elizabeth immediately after conceiving the Son of God (Luke i. 39), and have known the mystery of her miraculous conception so loudly proclaimed by Elizabeth (Luke i. 43).

2. He interprets "*took unto him*," he now took as his wife her to whom he was before only espoused. For, "*doing as the Angel commanded*" (v. 24) would, according to him, imply some course of action different from merely passively allowing her to remain in his house.

3. The Greek word *μνηστευθεως* signifies espousals, as contradistinguished from *ελαβε*, married, as appears from Deut. xx. 7. St. Jerome also says of Joseph, "*Omnia future uxoris noverat*" (Comment. in hunc locum). St. Chrysostom (in Matt. Hom. iv. 82) would seem to be of the same opinion.

According to Jewish usage (Philo de specialibus legibus, p. 788), those espoused were regarded as man and wife; hence, Joseph is called "*the husband of Mary*," and this St. Jerome tells us (in Matt. c. i.) is in accordance with Scriptural usage, and hence, whosoever violated another's spouse was regarded as an adulterer (Deut. xxii. 24) and punished as such.

As for consulting for the honour of the Virgin by means of marriage, it would not be regarded as a dishonour for a woman to have conceived of her espoused before marriage. Intercourse between them, although forbidden, was not regarded as entailing dishonour. (Selden Uxor. Heb.) Espousals were dissolved by a bill of divorce, like marriage (Deut. xxiv. 13 ; Patrizzi loco citato).

"*Before they came together*," a modest expression for conjugal intercourse. "*Before*," *until*, by no means implies carnal intercourse, *afterwards*; for, as St. Jerome clearly demonstrates from several Scriptural examples against the heretic Helvidius and others, such words as, *before*, *until*, &c., convey what happened or took place *before* an event, but by no means signifies what happened *afterwards*. That point is left undetermined. Thus, "Sit on my right *until* I make Thy enemies Thy footstool (Psa. cix.) by no means conveys that He ceased to sit at His father's right hand *afterwards*. "The raven did not return to the Ark *till* the waters were dried up upon the earth" (Gen. viii. 7). This does not imply that it returned *afterwards*.

"*She was found with child*" quite unexpectedly by Joseph, who, with all a husband's care, observed the condition of his blessed spouse. Probably he observed it when she was advanced three months in her pregnancy, after her return from visiting Elizabeth.

"*Of the Holy Ghost*." These words are not to be connected with "*was found*," as if Joseph knew the meaning or cause of her pregnancy, the contrary appears from the Angel dissipating his fears (v. 20); but with the words, "*with child*," as if to say of her pregnancy, the Spirit of God, the source of all grace and holiness, was the author who brought this about by His power and operation, not as the father of Jesus Christ, but as supplying the place of father. Although the conception of Christ was an act of the entire Trinity, still, being an act of sovereign goodness, grace, love and fecundity, it is, *by appropriation*, ascribed to the Holy Ghost, as the effects of power are attributed to God the Father, and acts of wisdom to God the Son.

To the several reasons commonly assigned why our Lord had chosen to be born of a married woman, St. Ignatius, martyr, adds another, viz., *ut partus ejus celaretur a Diabolo*, that the devil would be baffled, while thinking Him to be born in the ordinary way. Upon this idea, St. Bernard (Hom. 2, N. 3) on the words, "*missus est*," enlarges considerably, and shows that while God might have accomplished the work of redemption in whatever way He thought proper, still, in order to show how far He exceeded the demon in wisdom, He wished that the same instrumentality and course of action should be employed in man's redemption that had so successfully accomplished his fall. In the one case, the devil tempted the woman, and through her triumphed over the man; in the other, the woman would deceive the serpent in miraculously bringing forth a son, the mystery of which was concealed from the devil, so that her son, Christ Jesus, would triumph over him publicly, and destroy his empire.

19. The Virgin's conception is evidenced by the testimony of Joseph, to whom it caused such perplexity, and of the Angel by whom this perplexity was removed. Both are here adduced as unexceptionable witnesses of this miraculous occurrence.

"*A just man*." If he were "*a just man*," and therefore observant of the law in all things, should he not expose her, as prescribed (Num. v. 12)? And, moreover, are not those who are conscious of another's sin commanded to bear witness against him (Lev. v. 1)? The jealous husband who suspects his wife's fidelity, is allowed in Num. v. 12 to bring her before the priest, but not *bound* to do so. And as regards Leviticus, it is only when interpellated by the judge, one is bound to expose another's sin of which he is conscious.

Apart, however, from these answers, the observation does not apply at all here, inasmuch as the word "*just*" does not refer here to the mere virtue of justice generally regarded as one of the four *cardinal* virtues; but, it means the aggregate of all virtues, including goodness, benevolence, meekness, &c., with which holy Joseph was eminently endowed; and it was because he was thus charitable, meek, and con-

siderate, that he did not wish to expose her publicly, to make a public example of scorn of her, as the Greek word (*δευγματισαί*) clearly means, but he wished "*to put her away privately*," probably by giving her privately a bill of divorce, which he was not bound to give *publicly*, nor explain the causes of giving it. Others think he meditated leaving her and going into some distant country. It is quite clear that Joseph, whose virtue was tried in an extraordinary way on this occasion, strongly suspected the Virgin, the signs of whose pregnancy were beyond doubt, and with whom he had not cohabited, to be guilty of adultery. Yet still, knowing her great virtue, he was inspired by Jesus Christ himself, whom she bore in her sacred womb, with the prudence of adopting the wise course of parting with her. He would thus consult for himself, and avoid the imputation of sanctioning crime by living with a suspected adulteress, and of carrying patience to the excessively foolish extent of permitting the supposed offspring of sin to be attributed to him. He purposed doing so "*privately*" to consult for her character.

20. "*Thought*" had been anxiously revolving these things within himself during his waking hours, without coming to any determinate resolution. From this appears the prudence of Joseph, who acted neither rashly nor without reflection; and his meekness and secrecy, by not divulging his suspicions to any one, not even to the Virgin herself.

"*Behold*" arrests attention, the matter being a subject of admiration.

"*The Angel of the Lord*," generally supposed to be Gabriel, the same who announced the mystery of the Incarnation.

"*In sleep*." Whenever the Almighty deigns to manifest His will through dreams, He allows no doubt to exist regarding the reality and divine origin of His communications, as in the case of Abimelech, Pharaoh, Nabuchodonosor. Whenever clear, certain proofs of divine communication do not exist, then the observance of dreams, which come either from natural causes or the demon, is strictly prohibited (Deut. xviii. 10). God made known His will to Joseph on this occasion. Indeed, by disclosing to him the private thoughts which God alone, the searcher of hearts, could know, He sufficiently indicated the divine character of the communication.

"*Joseph*." The Angel addresses him in a kind, consoling manner, because his suspicion, so far as he was concerned, seemed well founded.

"*Son of David*," reminds Joseph of the promises regarding the birth of the Messiah, from the family of David; and thus prepares him for the revelation regarding the conception of our Lord, which he was about to disclose.

"*Fear not*," as if you were fostering an adulteress.

"*To take unto thee*," to retain in your house and live with her whom thou hast already repudiated in thy mind, and banish all thoughts of either dismissing or leaving her.

"*Mary thy wife*," who has been faithful to thee and perfectly sinless.

"*Conceived*." The Greek word, *γεννηθῆν*, means "*born*," to denote that our Lord was perfectly formed, that all His members and faculties were matured from the first moment of His conception in His mother's womb.

"*Is of the Holy Ghost*," that is, brought about by no human intervention, but by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost; while the word "*conceived*" shows that the Blessed Virgin had, according to the order of nature, performed the part of mother in conceiving our Lord, the words, "*is of the Holy Ghost*," show that, by a stupendous miracle, in the order of nature, the Holy Ghost had, by His divine operation, supplied the place occupied by a father in the natural order, without, at

the same time, being the father of our Lord, since the human nature of Christ received none of the substance of the Holy Ghost, so as to establish, as in the natural order, the relation of paternity.

21. "*Bring forth a son.*" Having assured Joseph of the supernatural conception of her offspring, the Angel now tells him what that offspring is. "*Shall bring forth,*" as a true mother. From this is refuted the error of Valentinus and others who asserted that our Lord brought a body with Him from heaven, and did not take flesh in the Virgin's womb.

"*A son,*" and not a daughter. He does not say, as was said to Zachary, "*she shall bring forth a son to thee,*" because it was not for Joseph, but for the entire world, our Lord was brought forth, "*parvulus natus est nobis,*" &c. (Isa. ix. 6).

"*And thou shalt call his name Jesus.*" Joseph is reminded in these words, of the care he is to bestow on the infant, of whom, although not the father, he is still constituted the natural guardian and foster-father, and also on the mother, on whom, far from sending her away, he should bestow all possible care and attention.

"*Jesus.*" This is the proper name of the Son of God, brought down from heaven by the Angel, and bestowed on Him at circumcision. It signifies *Saviour*, the same as the Hebrew word *Jesuah*, with a slight change of termination, which is derived, according to some, from the Hebrew verb *Jasah*, to *save*, or according to others, from the word *Jehosuah*, of which it is a contraction—compounded of *Jehorah*, *Lord*, and *suah*, *salvation*, contracted *Jesuah*, the *Lord Saviour*. This is the etymological reason of the word assigned by the Angel himself, "*for He shall save His people from their sins.*" The corresponding Hebrew word is sometimes written *Jehosuah*, and sometimes, particularly in books written since the Babylonish captivity (as in Esdras ii. 2; Nehemias vii. 7), in a contracted or shorter form, *Jesuah*, and this latter is the form preserved in the inscription of our Saviour's cross in the Church of the Holy Cross, Rome. In every instance the Septuagint interpreters render *Jehosuah*, *Jesus*; and so do Philo and Josephus. In the Vulgate it is always rendered *Josue*, by St. Jerome. In the Old Testament, we sometimes find the same persons called *Jehosuah* and *Jesuah*, which proves both terms to be identical. Thus, for instance, the High Priest, the son of Josedec, called *Jehosuah* (Aggeus i. 1; Zach. iii. 8), is called *Jesuah* (1 Esdras v. 2; 2 Esdras, or Nehemias xii. 26). It was by no means unusual with the Jews to contract and shorten words, as in the case of *Jehosuah* into *Jesuah*. In the New Testament, we find the word *Jesus*—the proper name of the Incarnate Son of God—applied to Josue, the son of Nun (Acts xi. 45; Heb. iv. 8). He was a distinguished type of Him who was pre-eminently entitled to the appellation of "*Saviour,*" not of one people alone, but of all peoples, from every tribe of the earth, embracing Jew and Gentile.

22. "*Now, all this was done.*" Some interpreters, among whom are St. Chrysostom, Irenæus, &c., say these words were spoken by the Angel, and form a continuation of his discourse to Joseph (vv. 20, 21). All this mysterious silence on the part of the Virgin, which caused you such perplexity, or rather, this mysterious pregnancy itself on the part of your virgin spouse, Mary, without human intervention, the cause of this perplexity, took place, &c. The generality of commentators, however, say they are the words of St. Matthew, explaining the foregoing words, and adducing the testimony of the Prophet as an additional argument corroborative of the testimony of the Angel. For, with the Jews, whom St. Matthew addressed, the fulfilment of this remarkable, well-known prophecy of Isaias would carry great weight. Patrizzi

(De Evang. Lib. iii., Dissert. xv.) advocates the former opinion, chiefly on the grounds-- 1st, that if "*all this*" were the words of St. Matthew, they would embrace the message of the Angel to Joseph, which certainly did not take place, in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled. 2ndly. That if these were not the Angel's words, he would not have sufficiently instructed Joseph as to the divine and supernatural origin of the child of the Virgin's womb, while the words of the Prophet would have effectually done this. 3rd. The Gospel narrative of what Joseph did (v. 24) would seem to convey that he did it at the close of the Angel's address, and that, therefore, the words of this verse and of v. 23 were comprised in it.

"*That the word might be fulfilled.*" The particle "*that,*" when there is question of the fulfilment of a prophecy, does not precisely express the *cause*, as if to say, the *cause* of the event taking place was in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled, since the event to take place was prior, in the mind of God, to the issuing of the prophecy. For, the prophecy was made, because the event it regarded was to take place. It means the *consequence*, so *that*, the consequence of all this was the verification of the prophecy. However, while generally denoting the consequence, it might be said here, in some sense, to indicate the *cause* also. For, among the causes of the conception of Christ by a virgin, was the verification of the promises made by God to the Fathers, which promises were contained in the SS. Scriptures. It may be said to refer to a *cause*, and to a *consequence*, at the same time. For, He who issued the prophecy, because He determined on bringing about the event, accomplished the event, because He predicted it, in order to vindicate His veracity, a prophecy, being a kind of promise which a man of veracity fulfils, because He made it.

23. "*Behold*" arrests attention when a matter of great importance is in question. "*A virgin shall be with child,*" &c. This celebrated prophecy is found in Isa. vii. 14. It was uttered on the occasion of the second expedition of Rasin, king of Syria, and of Phacee, king of Israel, to destroy the kingdom of Juda, over which Achaz then reigned, and of the whole race of David (Isa. vii. 6). Achaz with his people were seized with the greatest consternation, owing to the combination of these hostile forces against him. The Prophet was commanded by God to go and reassure Achaz, and tell him not to be afraid; and in proof of the verification of God's promise, he tells him to ask for some sign either from heaven or the lowest depths. Achaz incredulously refused to ask for any sign; whereupon the Prophet, addressing him and his attendant princes and the whole house of David, as well for the present as for all future times, tells them that the Lord Himself shall give a sign that he and his people shall be saved from destruction. That sign, which is a prodigious, unusual event, is, that a virgin should conceive, without any reference to a man. The Prophet makes no allusion whatever to a man. The Hebrew word for "*virgin,*" *alma*, in the several places of SS. Scripture in which it is used, is applied only to one really a virgin, or reputed such in common estimation (Gen. xxiv. 43; Exod. ii. 8; Cant. i. 3; vi. 8). St. Jerome (in cap. vii. Isaías) tells us that in the *Punic* language, which is derived from Hebrew sources, *alma*, signifies a virgin, and that, as far as his memory served him, he never knew it to be applied to any but to a virgin, and that a virgin young in point of years, "*virgo abscondita quæ non patuit virorum aspectibus.*" Thus are answered the objections of the Jews against the proof of our Lord's divinity founded on this passage of Isaías. Moreover, the sign given is that which Achaz refused, "*pete tibi signum,*" and on his refusing to ask for a sign, a something unusual, uncommon, derived from "*the depth of hell, or the height above,*" Isaías gives such a sign, "*dabit ipse Dominus vobis signum.*" There would be nothing

extraordinary in a virgin, after ceasing to be such, conceiving and bringing forth a son. In chap. ix. 6 the prophet Isaias speaks of the same, as "*Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Father of the world to come,*" &c. But, how could the birth of Christ and His conception by a virgin, after so long an interval, serve as a sign to reassure Achaz that his enemies would not succeed against him? What connexion is there between the conception on the part of a virgin and the liberation of Achaz and his people? Resp. 1st. There are several signs given in SS. Scripture which occurred after the event to which they referred (Exod iii. 12; 1 Kings x. 7-9; 4 Kings xix. 29; Isa. xxxvii. 30; Jer. xlv. 29). We are not necessarily to admit that the Prophet gives Achaz here a sign of his liberation. Achaz impiously refused to ask for a sign. Then, the Prophet, transported in spirit beyond the present time, regards with delight a sign of a still greater liberation—the liberation of the human race by the Virgin's Son—and this sign he gives to the entire family of David, even at the remotest period, without confining it to Achaz and those who accompanied him and shared in his distrust and incredulity, "*molesti estis Deo meo.*" 2ndly. The connexion between the liberation of Achaz and the conception by a virgin may be easily traced. It was a thing well known at the time that a virgin, of the house of David, would conceive and bring forth the Messiah. Unless this were the constant tradition of the Jewish Church, surely, the Apostles would not advance an assertion so incredible and difficult to prove. Micheas, contemporary of Isaias, refers to it, as a matter well known and expected by the men of his day (c. v. 1-3). Hence the Prophet wishes to inform Achaz that the designs of his enemies, who wished to extirpate the race of David, could not succeed, as the verification of the well-known decrees of God in regard to the birth of a ruler in Israel (Micheas v. 2), from a virgin, of the house of David, would forbid it. In truth, this sign given by Isaias was consequent and dependent on the permanent duration of the family of David; so much so, that if the family of David were destroyed, this sign could not take place. Hence, if this sign could not be questioned, neither could the duration of the house of David; and, therefore, from this sign could be concluded that the attacks of the enemies of Achaz, who was of the family of David, would be foiled.

"*And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is interpreted,*" &c. In the original Hebrew of Isaias, the corresponding term for "*they shall call*" is *carath*, which St. Jerome tells us, in his commentary, should be rendered, *thou shalt call*, or "*HE or she shall call.*" If rendered in the third person singular, it refers to the Virgin, who is to conceive—*she* shall call Christ by this name; if, in the second, "*thou shalt call,*" addressed to Achaz and the house of David—then, it embraces the entire spiritual house of David at all times. Hence, rendered by the Evangelist, "*they shall call.*" St. Jerome observes (in Isa. vii. 14), that, in quoting texts of Scripture, the sacred writers quote not precisely the words, but their meaning. "*Call,*" in accordance with Scriptural usage, signifies "*to be,*" and "*name*" is put for the reality or thing indicated. Hence, the words mean; He shall be, in reality, and shall possess the quality of being "*God with us;*" just as in c. ix. it is said, "*And His name shall be called Wonderful,*" &c., that is to say, He shall in reality be, and shall really possess the qualities here indicated. The words may also mean, they shall proclaim Him to be "*Emmanuel,*" or God with us, residing amongst us, by His incarnation, to which it is clear from the context there is reference here, wherein "*the word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*" here on earth, in the visible form of man which He assumed (Baruch iii. 38), in which alone He is capable of being a Jesus or Saviour, to save us from our sins. This will answer an objection that our Lord was not called, *Emmanuel*, in the Gospels, by the people among whom He lived; since *Emmanuel* only expresses an

attribute or quality, just as He was not called "*Wonderful*," &c., by His contemporaries. These terms, like Emmanuel, only expressed the qualities He would possess; Jesus alone is His proper name. In like manner, in Jer. xxiii. 6, *Dominus justus noster*, only expresses a quality, but not His proper name.

"*Which being interpreted is, God with us.*" A similar explanation is given (xxvii. 8, 33, 46). The interpretation of these words is no argument against St. Matthew having written in the Syro-Chaldaic, the vernacular of the Jews at the time; as it is quite common with all writers, to explain certain compound words, or notable foreign words, which were not in use among the people.

24. "*Joseph rising up*," shows the prompt obedience of Joseph. He obeyed promptly and without delay.

"*Did as the Angel commanded him, and (that is, or, namely) took unto him his wife.*" According to those who hold that Joseph had been at this time married to the Blessed Virgin, by this is meant, that he retained her and gave up all ideas of privately separating from her, in whatever way that was to be done. According to those who hold with Patrizzì that the Blessed Virgin was up to this only espoused or *betrothed* to St. Joseph, the words mean, that Joseph now married the Blessed Virgin and took her to his own house. This latter opinion seems to be borne out by the literal meaning of the expression used in reference to the Blessed Virgin (v. 20), "*Fear not to take unto thee.*" "*And he took unto him,*" would seem in the Greek *παρελαβεν* to denote marriage, to which *μνηστεύεσθαι*, *espoused*, expressive of *betrothal*, is antithetical. Most likely, on being interrogated by Joseph, the Blessed Virgin disclosed to him the great mystery operated in her (Luke i. 38-43), which, from humility, she hitherto concealed.

25. "*And he knew her not*," a modest expression for conjugal intercourse. The particle "*and*" has the force of "*but, however, he knew her not*," a signification the particle often bears before a negative (Matt. xii. 5, 39, 43; xxvi. 55-60; Acts vii. 5, &c.). The sentence, "*and he knew her not*," &c., is thrown in incidentally between the words, "*he took unto him his wife—and he called His name Jesus*," the two things enjoined on him by the Angel. The birth of our Lord, consequent on which He was to receive His name from Joseph, is only incidentally introduced in the parenthetical sentence, "*and he knew her not till*," &c., the object of which is to show that not only did a virgin conceive, but also a virgin brought forth a son without any human intervention.

"*Until.*" St. Jerome ably refutes the error of Helvidius, Jovinian, &c., regarding the perpetual virginity of our Blessed Lady, which error these heretics would fain deduce from these words, as if Joseph knew her *afterwards*, as also from the words "*first-born*," as if others were *afterwards* born of her.

St. Jerome shows, from several Scriptural examples, that the particle, *until*, and others such, in negative sentences, only convey what was not done, without any inference to what afterwards occurred (Gen. viii. 7; Num. xx. 17; Deut. vii. 24; Psal. lxx. 18; cix. 1; cxi. 8; 2 Kings xxii., &c.). The Evangelist's only object in this form of words was to show, that Christ was born of a virgin, without any reference to any future occurrence. St. Jerome derisively asks, if any one said, "*Helvidius did not do penance till he died*," would it imply he did penance *afterwards*?

"*First-born*" does not imply the birth of others, afterwards; otherwise, as St. Jerome argues against Helvidius, the law requiring the *first-born* to be consecrated to God a month after birth (Num. xviii. 16) could not be complied with till other

children followed. The word only implies, that no other was born before Him; but not, that others were born after Him.

Similar is the answer to the objection founded on the words, "*came together*" (v. 18). Patrizzi gives another answer. He denies that "*coming together*" means conjugal intercourse at all; and hence, he says, that St. Jerome dealt rather liberally with Helvidius, in admitting this meaning. He asserts, that the words mean, "*before they were married*," and that they refer to the interval between *espousals* and *marriage*.

CHAPTER II.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of the arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem, attracted thither by the wonderful appearance of a star, which indicated the birth of the true King of the Jews (1-2). The trouble, which the intrepid announcement by the Magi caused Herod and all his followers (3). The convening of the Sanhedrin; the prophecy of Micahs relating to the birth-place of the Messiah (4-6). The hypocritical affectation of reverence on the part of Herod, for the infant King, on making inquiries regarding the apparition of the star (7-8). The reappearance of the star which conducted the Magi to Bethlehem, where, on entering the house indicated by the star, falling down they adore our Lord, presenting, at the same time, gifts expressive of their faith in His Divinity and humanity (9-11). The Divine intimation given to the Magi not to return to Herod, and to Joseph to fly with the child and his mother into Egypt, in order to baffle the wicked designs of Herod (12-13). Joseph's prompt, unammuring obedience, thus verifying the prediction of the prophet (14-15). The slaughter of the holy innocents, and the completion of the prophecy of Jeremias (16-18). Herod's death; Joseph's return with the child and his mother to their native country, in obedience to the Divine injunction (19-21). His fears of Archelaus, Herod's cruel son and successor; his departure for Nazareth, in obedience to the Divine admonition, whence resulted the fulfilment of a prophecy, relating to our Divine Lord (22-23).

TEXT.

WHEN Jesus, therefore, was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of king Herod, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.

2. Saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For, we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him.

3. And king Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4. And assembling together all the chief priests and the Scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born.

5. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet:

6. And thou Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for, out of thee shall come forth the captain, that shall rule my people Israel.

7. Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them;

8. And sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go and diligently inquire after the child, and when you have found him; bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him.

9. Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was.

10. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11. And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12. And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country.

13. And after they were departed, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For, it will come to pass, that Herod will seek the child to destroy him.

14. Who arose, and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt, and he was there until the death of Herod:

15. *That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

16. *Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry; and sending, killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time, which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.*

17. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying:*

18. *A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Therefore*," is resumptive of the preceding narrative, or rather, continues it. The Greek particle, $\delta\epsilon$, has sometimes this meaning. Hence, rendered "*therefore*."

"*Jesus*," the name given to the Son of God by Joseph, in obedience to the instructions from heaven (c. i. 21-25).

"*Was born*." The circumstances of His birth are given (Luke ii.), and passed over by St. Matthew.

"*In Bethlehem of Juda*," refers to the Bethlehem situated in the portion assigned to the tribe of Juda, which, united with Benjamin, formed the kingdom of Juda, as distinguished from that of Israel. The Greek has ($\iotaουδαίας$) "*of Judea*," the reading followed by the Greek Fathers and by some Latins. St. Jerome says, "*Judea*" crept into the text instead of "*Juda*," through the error of copyists. Moreover, we read (v. 6), "*And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda*." However, it might be said as regards this latter reason, that Judea might mean only the portions assigned to Juda and, Benjamin, as it is said Archelaus reigned in Judea (v. 22); and many regard *Judea* as the correct reading, as contradistinguished from Samaria and Galilee. It embraced *Juda*. "*Of Juda*," distinguishes it from another Bethlehem, which was in the tribe of Zabulon in Galilee (Josue xix. 15). The place, the time, and other circumstances of our Redeemer's birth are mentioned by the Evangelist not alone for the sake of historical accuracy, but also to show that our Redeemer was born in the place, and at the time marked out in the ancient prophecies (Mich. v. 2; Gen. xlix. 10).

"*In the days of Herod the king*." This was Herod the Great, surnamed ASCALONITES, a foreigner from Idumea. He was not a Jew, but only a proselyte to the Jewish religion. He was raised to the throne by the Romans. He is called "*king*" to distinguish him from other potentates of that name, as he was king not only of Judea, but of the adjacent districts. He is thus distinguished from his son, Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, who beheaded the Baptist, and mocked our Lord at His Passion (Luke xiii. 31; Matt. xiv.); and also from his grandson, Herod Agrippa, whom Claudius made king of Trachonitis, Galilee, and Iturea. It was by this Herod Agrippa that St. James the Greater was put to death, and St. Peter cast into prison. (Acts xii.) The mention of "*Herod the king*" in this passage shows that the sceptre had now passed away from Juda, and the period for the birth of Christ had arrived (Gen. xlix. 10). This Herod, in whose lifetime, according to the Gospel narrative here, our Lord was born, died in the spring of the year 750, *urbis conditæ*. But the reckoning of the Christian era begins with the year (v.c.) 754. Hence, the Christian era is post-dated by, at least, four years.

"*Behold*," shows the arrival referred to, to be an unexpected event; and also, that it occurred soon after our Redeemer's birth.

"*There came wise men*." The original for *wise men*, is, *Magi*. There is a great diversity of opinion regarding the profession, character, and number of these Magi.

As regards their *profession*, the more commonly received opinion seems to be, that among the nations of the East, particularly the Chaldeans and Persians, the *Magi* were their men of learning, whose profession was the study of astrology and the investigation of the truths of natural philosophy. The same class were termed *Philosophers*, among the Greeks, *Brahmins*, among the Indians, *Chaldeans*, among the Babylonians, *Hierophants*, among the Egyptians, *Druids*, among the Celtic nations (Cicero, Lib. 1; de Divinit. Strabo, Lib. 16-9; Tertullian against Marcion 1). They were held in great consideration by their countrymen. From among them the kings were chosen, and they usually presided over and directed the councils of kings. Among the Persians, no one was raised to the kingly dignity, who was not first imbued in the science and discipline of the *Magi*. (Cicero, Lib. 1; de Divin. Plato Alcib. 1, &c.) Owing to the abuse made in subsequent ages of the profession of the *Magi*, the term, at first a title of honour and repute, became a term of disrepute subsequently, like the words, *sophist*, *astrologer*, *tyrant*, &c., which originally were terms of honour and repute. Hence, we find the reproachful epithet given to *Simon Magus*. The *Magi* who visited our Lord were, according to St. Jerome (in cap. 2 Danielis), “*the philosophers of their own nation*,” distinguished for their elevated position and learning.

As regards the CHARACTER or DIGNITY of the *Magi*, it is held by many, that they were kings. They were called such by some of the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers (St. Augustine, Lib. 3, de *Mirabilibus Scripturæ*; St. Cyprian de *Baptismo Christi*; St. Chrysostom de *Nativitate Christi*; St. Anselm, Theophylact, Bede, St. Thomas, *hic*. &c.) Most likely, they were not mighty potentates, ruling over extensive countries; but rather petty princes or kings of subordinate rank, in the districts wherein they resided. It is usual in Scripture to call such by the name of “*kings*,” as (Gen. xiv.) in the case of the four kings vanquished by Abraham, and of the friends of Job, also called kings. (Tobias ii. 15, &c.)

Were they rulers of extensive districts, very probably, the Evangelist would make mention of it, as the visit of such to our Lord would redound to His glory. Moreover, Herod would seem to treat them as inferiors. “*Sending them to Bethlehem . . . bring me word again*,” &c. The words of Psa. lxxi., “*The kings of Tharsis*,” &c., and of Isa. lx., “*Kings shall walk in the brightness of thy rising*,” &c., applied by the Church to the event of the Epiphany, are not opposed to this opinion. For, the words quoted may be regarded as referring, in a general sense, to the conversion of the Gentiles and of their kings, who from every country would enter the fold of Christ, and pay our Redeemer divine honours. This general reference is applied by the Church to the Epiphany in particular, when the first fruits of the Gentiles were presented to our Lord. In truth, if strictly interpreted, the words would prove, that the *Magi* Were kings of Ethiopia, of Tharsis, of the Islands, of Saba and Arabia (Psa. lxxi.; Isa. lx.) ; nay, that all kings came to worship Him, in the stable. “*And all kings of the earth shall adore Him*” (Psa. lxxi. 11).

As regards the *time* of their visit, there is a diversity of opinion. The commonly received opinion in the Church, as indicated in her arrangement of the festivals of the Epiphany and Purification, would seem to be, that they came *shortly after* our Lord's birth, *before* the Purification and Presentation in the Temple. This opinion is well founded on the words of St. Matthew in this verse, which clearly convey, that the *Magi* made their appearance at Jerusalem very soon after our Lord's birth. “*When Jesus was born, behold*,” &c. Others, however, fix the date of the arrival of the *Magi* after the Purification, and these differently assign different periods after it, more or less remote, according to the meaning attached by them to v. 16, and to the term of “*two years and under*” fixed on by Herod. The advocates of this opinion are chiefly

influenced by the narrative of St. Luke (ii. 39) who states that our Lord and His parents returned to Nazareth immediately after His presentation, which took place, "*according to the law of the Lord.*" This narrative they cannot reconcile in the supposition that the visit of the Magi took place before the presentation, with that of St. Matthew (v. 13), who states that our Lord and His parents set out for Egypt by divine admonition, immediately after the visit of the Magi. Hence, as our Lord could not be presented in the Temple at the appointed time, "*according to the law of the Lord*" (Luke ii. 39), if He left previously for Egypt, as St. Matthew says He did immediately after the departure of the Magi (v. 13), they conclude, that the visit of the Magi must be *after* the Purification and presentation in the Temple. The interval is more or less prolonged by the several advocates of the latter opinion. We need not, however, depart from the commonly received opinion, which fixes the date of the visit of the Magi, before the presentation; and the apparent discrepancy in the narratives of both Evangelists may be reconciled, by supposing that after the visit of the Magi, our Lord was presented in the Temple; and having proceeded thence, to Nazareth, Joseph was there admonished in sleep, and proceeded at once from Nazareth to Egypt (see v. 13, Commentary on). The supposition that the visit of the Magi occurred, on the occasion of one of the annual visits Joseph and Mary were wont to make to Jerusalem, is utterly gratuitous. The sacred text says, they visited Jerusalem (Luke ii. 41). There is no mention of their having visited *Bethlehem*, which was out of the way, on their visit to Jerusalem. The difficulty founded on the term of two years fixed upon by Herod will be explained (v. 16, see Commentary on).

As regards the country whence they came there is also a great diversity of opinion. Some say, they came from Chaldea, where the science of the Magi flourished; others, among them St. Basil, from Mesopotamia; others, with Justin Martyr, Tertullian, St. Hilary, &c., from Arabia Felix, where the gifts presented were found in abundance; others, from Persia, where the name and profession of the Magi were celebrated, and the custom prevailed of presenting gifts to kings on the occasion of visiting them. All we can glean with certainty from the Gospel is that they came from some country "*east*" of Jerusalem. They came to Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, where they naturally expected to obtain the most authentic tidings of the place where the king of the Jews was born.

As regards their NUMBER, nothing certain can be known from the Gospel. The common opinion, however, has been that they were *three* in number. This is asserted by St. Leo the Great in his Sermons; St. Maximus of Turin; Ven. Bede, in Matthew ii.; Origen, in Gen. Hom. xiv. § 3, &c. (See v. 3, commentary on.)

2. "*Saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*" These words may mean: Where can we find that celebrated King of the Jews, that long expected Messiah referred to in their ancient prophecies (v. 4) who is now born; or, where is He who, unlike others, is not merely elected or assumed by men to be King of the Jews, as was Herod by the Romans, but is born such; is such, from His very nativity? One thing the Magi assert, without doubt or hesitation, viz., the *fact* of His birth; another thing they inquire about, viz., the *place* where He is to be found. They probably supposed the birth of their Messiah would be welcome news to all Jews and Jewish proselytes. It had been long expected. Most likely, they had no idea of the feelings it produced in the jealous mind of Herod, or if any such idea entered their minds, most probably, they courageously spurned it. Strengthened by the same divine grace that summoned them from home, and sustained them on their toilsome journey, they continue their search for the new born King, and fearlessly proclaim it in the very presence of Herod.

Hence, St. Chrysostom (*Expositio super Mattheum*) remarks, "*O happy Magi, who in the presence of a most cruel king, before they knew Christ, became confessors of Christ.*" By manifesting Himself to the Magi, our Lord wished to receive testimony from the learned and exalted, as well as from the unlearned and lowly who bore it to Him at His nativity, from Gentiles as well as from Jews. The active, laborious faith of the distant Gentiles condemned the sloth and infidelity of the Jews, among whom He was born, and to whom He was first promised.

"*For we have seen His star in the East.*" Most likely, this was a luminous body more brilliant than the stars that belong to our system, having the appearance of a star, but not one in reality, as may be conjectured from its motion from east to west—the opposite of the course of our stars; from its brilliant appearance by day and by night; from its moving at one time, and continuing stationary at another; from its position in the lower regions of the atmosphere, so as to indicate localities; and especially, from its standing over the house where the divine infant was. The Magi, who were addicted to the study of astronomy, and observed the course of the heavenly bodies, were particularly struck with the unusual brilliancy of this star. Their attention was, probably, arrested the more on account of the prophecy of Balaam regarding the star that "*would rise out of Jacob*" (Num. xxiv. 17), of which prophecy, they were probably made aware. For, the nations of the East, whence Balaam had sprung (he was brought "from Aram, from the mountains of the East," Num. xxiii. 7), were extensively imbued with his prophecy, in which it was declared that a star would indicate the birth of a mighty ruler, who, according to the belief in general circulation, was to arise in Judea. Seeing, then, the star in question, the Magi concluded, while the grace of God interiorly enlightened them, "*giving intelligence to those who saw it*" (St. Leo, Sermon de Epiph.). that it indicated the long expected birth of this great Ruler, regarding whom the traditions of the earth were so explicit and universal. (Tacitus Hist. Lib. v.; Suetonius in Vespasianum; Cicero de Divinit. Lib. 2; Virgil Eclog. iv.; Suidas, &c.) Hence, in Greek, the definite article is used before star, τὸν ἀστῆρα, "*the star,*" which was spoken of long before, as the index of His birth. (St. Chrysostom Hom. vi.) If this star were not long before expected, neither Herod nor the people of Jerusalem would have been so much moved; they would have treated the whole affair derisively, as an idle, unmeaning dream.

"*In the East.*" This may mean: We saw His star (which appeared in) the East, or we (being in the East) saw His star shining over Judea. Some expositors adopt the former meaning. These maintain that the star which appeared in the East moved on before the Magi, and guided them to Judea. This is the commonly received opinion, and it also accords best with the sense of the holy Fathers and of the Church, which, in her hymn, sings, "*Stellam sequentes præviam.*" Others advocate the latter opinion, viz., that from the East they saw the star over Judea, and came directly thither to pay their homage.

"*And are come to adore Him.*" It may be that the Divinity of our Lord was made known to the Magi, and the honours they paid and the gifts they offered Him, in His lowly state, would, in a great measure, warrant this opinion. For, they could hardly venerate or honour Him as a mere earthly monarch, in the destitute condition in which they saw Him. However, the word "*adore*" does not, of itself, convey this; neither does the prostration which it involves. The word is often taken in Scripture to signify mere civil honour and respect paid by one man to another. Here, however, if we consider all the circumstances, it seems all but certain that the Magi meant to pay our Lord divine honour (see v. 11, commentary on).

3. Herod was very jealous in regard to the Royal power which he was anxious to transmit to his family. It was this feeling that prompted him, as Josephus informs us, to put to death all that belonged to the Royal race of the Machabees, and all who might have any claim whatever to the throne of Juda. Hence, he was seized with the greatest consternation at the announcement made by the Magi.

"*And all Jerusalem with him.*" The greater portion of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, content with their present state, feared any change. Addicted to earthly pleasures and sunk in the sleep of sin, they were insensible to the exalted blessings their long-expected Messiah had in store for them. All these were troubled, and sympathized with Herod. The few just dared not express their feelings of joy for fear of irritating a sanguinary jealous tyrant who, out of jealousy, regarding the preservation of his usurped power, had already committed the greatest deeds of cruelty, so that according to external appearances at least, they felt with Herod and seemed to feel as he felt.

4. "*The chief priests,*" may denote all those, who filled the office of High Priest among the Jews. In Herod's time, the office was not for life; it became venal. It was vacated almost annually, and filled up by several persons in one lifetime. Or, more likely, the words denote the heads of the twenty-four sacerdotal families, according to the division made by David (1 Par. xxiv. 4). These were called "*princes of the sanctuary and princes of God*" (v. 5), "*chiefs of the priests*" (2 Par. xxxvi. 14). They constituted a portion of the Supreme Council among the Jews. Hence, Herod convoked them, as the most influential and learned among the priests, whom they represented. The sacerdotal body was too numerous to admit of all being called together.

"*And Scribes of the people.*" These were a class of men among the Jews whose peculiar office it was to preserve the sacred records, to announce and expound the SS. Scriptures to the people; and, in cases of doubt, to point out the bearing of the SS. Scriptures on such cases. Those who are designated "*Scribes*" by SS. Matthew and Mark, are called "*Lawyers*" by St. Luke (vii. 30; xi. 46), although he also calls them Scribes (v. 21). The term "*Scribes*" also designated learned men, like Esdras. Hence, it is said of him, "*et ipse Scriba relox in lege Moysi*" (Esdras vii. 6); and our Redeemer speaks of "*a Scribe instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven*" (Matt. xiii. 52). The corresponding Hebrew word (*Sopharin*) according to etymology means, either those learned and well versed in books, or those whose duty it was to announce and narrate; the duty of the Scribe being to announce the SS. Scriptures to the people. These, with the heads of the priestly families, constituted the chief council over which the High Priest presided. Hence, they presided at the judgment of condemnation passed on our Divine Redeemer (Matt. xx. 18; Mark xiv. 53; Luke xxii. 66). Against them, as the spiritual guides perverting the people by word and example, our Redeemer unsparingly hurls His heaviest denunciations. In the Old Law, and before the Babylonish captivity, their authority was very extensive, embracing military and forensic interests. But, in the time of our Lord, their office was confined to matters appertaining to religion, such as the reading, interpretation, and knowledge of the Law. Although each tribe had its "*Scribes*," they were chiefly confined to the Tribe of Levi, whose exclusive duty it was to attend to religion (Calmet in *hunc locum*). It was because of the supreme authority which the Sanhedrim exercised in matters of religion, that Herod convened it to ascertain where the Messiah was to be born, according to the prediction of the ancient prophets. Hence, it appears he looked upon the "*King of the Jews*," inquired after by the Magi as the Messiah or Christ, so long expected by the Jewish nation.

5. They all—the full council—unanimously declared, that it was in Bethlehem of Juda, He was to be born, according to the testimony of the prophet Micheas, whom they quote, as, in the following verse. It seems to have been the common opinion among the Jews, that it was in Bethlehem the Messiah was to be born (John vii. 42). “*For so it is written,*” that is, written by the prophet as follows (v. 6), which places the matter beyond all cavil or dispute. The council quotes the prophet Micheas to leave Herod no cause for doubting the accuracy of their response.

6. “*And thou Bethlehem, land of Juda,*” &c. There is some difference in the reading found here in St. Matthew and Micheas (v. 2). In Micheas we read, instead of “*land of Juda,*” “*and thou Bethlehem, Ephrata.*” Ephrata was another name for Bethlehem (Gen. xxxv. 16, 19; xlviii. 7), and the Evangelist, or the Scribes, &c., add the words, “*land of Juda,*” to distinguish it from another Bethlehem which was situated in the tribe of Zabulon (Josue xix. 16). As regards this and other discrepancies between the reading of the passage, as found here and in the Prophet, St. Jerome (in Micheas) observes, that the Scribes, &c., quoted for Herod, not the precise words, of the prophet Micheas, but their meaning as agreed upon at the time; and St. Matthew records historically their words, and not precisely those of the Prophet. “*Art not the least among the princes of Juda;*” the contrary of this is read in Micheas, “*art a little one among the thousands of Juda.*” In order to reconcile these opposite readings, some read Micheas interrogatively thus, “*art thou a little one, &c.*”? the intended answer to which, “*by no means,*” coincides with the reading of St. Matthew. Others say, the meaning given in St. Matthew is implied in the reading of Micheas, as if the Prophet said, considering your edifices, number of citizens and material greatness, thou art, indeed, very small. But, if we look to the princes you gave, such as David, and art to give hereafter—the Messiah—thou art, by no means, small or insignificant “*among the princes,*” which is interpreted thus, “*in principibus,*” that is, in giving princes to Juda. The Septuagint reading of Micheas (χιλίαςιν) “*thousands of Juda,*” is substantially the same as in St. Matthew. The Hebrew word, *Eleph*, signifies both a *prince* and a *thousand*; because among the Israelites a prince governed a *thousand* (Jansenius Iprensis denies this meaning of *Eleph*. He contends that the Hebrew word, *Alluph*, and not, *Eleph*, signifies a *thousand*). But the meaning is the same; for the words signify “*thou art by no means insignificant among the leading cities of Juda, inhabited by thousands, over which princes are appointed to rule,*” or “*thou art by no means small among the populous cities of Juda, entitled from their thousands of inhabitants to be ruled by princes.*” The Hebrew people were divided by Moses into thousands of families, each of which thousand families had its own prince or ruler (Exod. xviii. 25; Judg. vi. 15).

“*Who shall rule.*” The Greek word for “*rule*” (ποιμαίνει) is a pastoral expression, familiar even to Pagan writers. (Homer, &c.) It conveys an allusion to the pastoral and mild rule of the Messiah, who would rule His people not with “*an iron rod*” (Psa. ii. 9), as He shall rule His Gentile enemies; but with the mild staff of pastoral authority. The words following these, quoted from Micheas, “*and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity,*” which show that the words of the Prophet can only apply to the Messiah, Man-God—are not quoted by the Scribes for Herod, as they had no immediate connexion with the question regarding the place of Christ’s nativity.

“*My people Israel.*” The words “*my people*” are not found in Micheas (v. 2), where we only read, “*who is to be the ruler in Israel.*” The words “*my people*” were inserted by St. Matthew, or rather by the Scribes, whose words St. Matthew

historically records, to convey an idea of the universal reign of the Messiah, not only over Juda, among whose cities Bethlehem, humanly speaking, was rather insignificant, but over the entire people of Israel, embracing all the peoples of the earth who were spiritually numbered in Israel, and born of Abraham, through Isaac, the heir of God's promises.

7. "*Then*"—after ascertaining the birthplace of the Messiah, according to the prediction of the ancient prophecies—"privately calling the wise men." He wished to know noiselessly all about the appearance of the star which indicated the birth of the Messiah, in order to compass his murderous designs the more securely, by removing all grounds for excitement among the people, which the public discussion of the particulars respecting the apparition of this miraculous star was calculated to produce in so large a city, and among a people who had been so long anxiously awaiting this happy event.

"*Learned diligently the time of the star,*" &c. He concluded that the Messiah must have been born at the time of the star's appearing; and having already ascertained the *place*, he would now ascertain the *time* of His birth, in order to ensure the success of his designs on the life of the child, so that if the Magi should proceed home without returning, he still would have secured all the necessary information to enable him successfully to effect his wicked purpose. Our Redeemer calls his son, who, no doubt, inherited his father's vices, a fox "*Go, tell that fox*" (Luke xiii. 32).

8. The murderous hypocrisy displayed here may be easily seen from the steps he had taken to *adore* Him (v. 16). Of course, he meant to do away with Him. "*After the child.*" He could not bring himself to style Him the "*the King of the Jews,*" as the Magi had designated him. Perhaps he employs this simple form to conceal more effectually, by this affected indifference, his murderous designs. It was, possibly, from the same motive he omitted sending any person to accompany the *Magi*, lest the presence of his satellites might put either the people of Bethlehem or the parents and supposed attendants of the child on their guard. No doubt, be his wicked designs what they may, this was all arranged by the overruling providence of God, who is sure to compass His ends, sweetly, but infallibly. "*Deus, ejus Providentia in sui dispositione non fallitur*" (Dom. vii., Post Pentecost).

9. "*Having heard the king,*" of whose wicked designs and feelings on the occasion of the intelligence imparted by them, they were, doubtless, unconscious, "*went their way*" towards Bethlehem, whither he despatched them (v. 8).

"*The star they had seen in the East.*" From this, some expositors infer, contrary to the commonly received opinion, that the star did not move before them from the East guiding them on their journey. However, there seems to be no argument here against the common opinion; for, it is not denied that it did go before them.

"*Went before them*"—appeared in its original brilliancy. This would rather imply that the star did go before them in the previous part of their journey. It disappeared at Jerusalem, in order to force the Magi to prosecute their search by making inquiries through the ordinary human channels of information, and thus proclaim the birth of the child whom they came to seek.

"*Stood over where the child was.*" It moved no longer; so as to indicate to them that they had now reached the term of their journey. It is quite clear that this was not one of the stars belonging to our system, from its position in the lower regions of the air, otherwise, it could not indicate a particular place; from its motion from

East to West, and from *North* to *South*—Bethlehem was seven miles to the south-west of Jerusalem—also from its appearing, most likely, in the daytime; as, probably, it was in the daytime, the Magi left Herod for Bethlehem in search of the child; and also from its remaining stationary; the fixed stars in the firmament and the comets, which are in the upper regions of the atmosphere, being ever in motion.

10. The reappearance of the star filled them with exceedingly great joy. All their fears and doubts are banished; for, now they have a heavenly, divine indication assuring them of the prosperous issue of their journey. Now, by anticipation, they enjoy the well-earned reward of their toilsome journey, of their undoubting confidence in trusting themselves to the guidance of God's unerring providence, in whom no one ever confided and was confounded. "*In Te Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum*" (Psa. xxx.)—"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded."

11. "*The house*" is commonly understood by the holy Fathers, to refer to the stable where our Lord was born. This is called, a *house*, in accordance with Jewish usage, which gives the name of "*house*" to every dwelling place. Thus the Psalmist (ciii. 17) calls the heron's nest his house, "*Herodii domus.*" Others say it refers to some more commodious dwelling to which our divine Lord was transferred. Those who, with St. Epiphanius, &c., maintain that it was only two years after His birth the Magi adored our Lord at Bethlehem (v. 16), after sojourning in the meantime at Nazareth, are unanimous in asserting, that the place where the Magi saw our Lord was a house different from the stable where He was born. The same opinion is adopted by others who do not share in the views of St. Epiphanius, &c. But, the common opinion of almost all the holy Fathers and ancient writers is, that the word "*house*" refers to the stable in which our Redeemer was born.

"*They found the child with Mary His mother.*" Probably, Joseph was absent on some domestic business on this occasion, Providence so arranging it, lest the Magi, who might have learned from the Sybilline books, or from other sources, that the future deliverer of Judæa was to be born of a virgin, should imagine he was the father of the child; and the Blessed Virgin, having brought forth our Lord without the throes of childbirth—the punishment of woman's sin—was, in the absence of all attendants, able to mind her ordinary domestic duties; or, if Joseph was present, which is most likely—as it is hard to think, after all he suffered, he would be deprived of this consoling spectacle—he was designed in the phrase, "*Mary, His mother,*" since, with her, he was the guardian and protector of Jesus Christ.

The phrase, "*Mary His mother,*" without being meant to exclude Joseph, conveys that Joseph and Mary so acted in the presence of the Magi that, by Divine instinct, these understood that our Lord was not begotten after the manner of other children, but by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. Most likely, the Blessed Virgin, who was, doubtless, endowed with the gift of tongues, conversed with the Magi, and narrated to them the wonders connected with the birth of the adorable infant. Hence, interiorly enlightened by Divine faith, "*falling down, they adored Him,*" not merely as the tribute due to an earthly king, but as a homage due to the God of heaven.

Whatever may be the etymological meaning of the word "*adore*" (προσκυνεῖν)—which in the Scriptures of the Old Testament is sometimes used to designate mere civil respect and reverence (Gen. xxiii. 7), in the New Testament, however, it has always reference to religious worship—it is the opinion of the holy Fathers generally, among them, Irenæus, Chrysostom, &c., that here the word denotes Divine honour, and that these Magi were enlightened by the Holy Spirit to believe in our Lord's Divinity, and

to adore Him, as God; and, indeed, the entire history of their coming to Jerusalem, with all its circumstances, would hardly leave us any grounds for arriving at any other conclusion. For, as Patrizzi well observes (Diss. xxvii. de Magis), it is clear the Magi regarded our Lord in a different light from other kings; for, how could it possibly happen, that one would proceed to venerate a foreign king hardly ushered into existence, and that from a far distant country, without any hope of emolument; nay, with manifest danger arising from the jealousy of another king? Arriving at Jerusalem, where they discovered that Herod reigned, if they thought of a mere earthly king, would they not have supposed Him to be Herod's son; that the only place to find Him was the Royal Palace; why then cry out, "*Ubi est qui natus est, &c.*"? And although they find Him to be unknown to the Jews themselves; still, they have no doubt regarding Him. They perceive that the sources of information consulted are the oracles of the ancient Prophets, and the answer to their question to be given from that quarter. If there were question of a mere earthly king, could Herod's offer to adore an infant king, born of his own subjects, in his own dominions, have any meaning? Although they discover Him without the ordinary insignia of royalty, in a state of humiliation, they still "*fell down and adored Him.*" Could this be so if they had only human ideas regarding Him? They must have regarded Him in the true light of a Man-God—the repairer of the human race, especially as it was not unlikely that the Spirit of God enlightened their minds, and that the Blessed Virgin disclosed to them the wondrous circumstances of His birth, &c., rather than as the carnal Jews expected Him as a temporal ruler, who was to subject to His sway all nations; for, viewed in this latter capacity, they should naturally entertain feelings of aversion for Him.

"*And opening their treasures,*" &c., that is, the caskets in which they carried the precious gifts destined for the new-born King. It was a custom among the Easterns that no one would visit a king or prince, at least for the first time, without presenting gifts to him. The law of Moses prescribed "*non apparebis in conspectu meo vacuus.*" (Exod. xxxi., &c.) Thus we also find the Queen of Saba bringing costly gifts to Solomon, and receiving costlier still (2 Par. ix. 12). The Magi present to our Lord "*gold,*" &c., gifts with which their country abounded. We are informed by Ezechiel (xxvii. 22) and by Pliny (Lib. xii. c. 14) that these gifts were found in great abundance in Arabia, from which the Magi, most likely, had come. In the time of St. Epiphanius (Expositio Cath. Fid.) it was a tradition among the Jews, that Abraham gave his children, by Cetura, gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and now the Magi, their descendants, after his example, present the same gifts to the infant God. Whether they believed Him to be the Man-God (which is most likely) or not, these gifts are interpreted by the holy Fathers to have a very marked and significant adaptation for expressing this belief. Even though they did not understand this significance, still the holy Fathers are almost unanimous in asserting that the providence of God arranged these gifts so as to convey this meaning, just as the anointing of our Lord's feet by Magdalene had reference to His death and burial ("*ad sepeliendum me fecit*"), although, probably, she never meant it. "*Gold*" is a present suited for a king, or to express royal dignity; *frankincense*, which was used in sacrifice, was a suitable gift to be offered to God; and "*myrrh,*" which was used for preserving and embalming bodies, suited as a present to Him as a mortal man; so that these presents were a real and practical profession of belief in His kingly dignity, in His Divine and Human natures. This was well expressed by an ancient writer, the poet Juvenecus: "*Aurum, thus, myrrham regique hominique Deoque dona ferunt.*" These gifts denote that this was He of whom the Prophets sung (Isa. xl.; Psa. lxxi.), "*Omnes de Saba venient aurum et thus deferentes;*" "*Reges Tharsis et Insula munera*

offerent, reges Arabum," &c. These gifts signified the offerings we should present to God: of *charity*, symbolized by *gold*; of *prayer* and *devotion*, by *frankincense*; of *mortification*, by *myrrh*. They also denote the three kinds of good works most agreeable to God. *Almsdeeds* ("gold"), by which we assist our neighbour; *prayer*—"frankincense," by which we invoke and worship God—sacrifice is included; *fasting*—"myrrh," by which we regulate our passions and affections. We thus offer to God all we have or are: by *alms*, our works and our substance; by *prayer*, our souls; by *fasting*, our bodies.

It is uncertain whether they all offered these three gifts, or one offered one gift, another a different one—one "gold," another "frankincense," and a third "myrrh." From this triple form of gift, some infer that the Magi, who certainly numbered more than one (for the Evangelist calls them in the plural, *Magi*), were three in number. Others maintain, whatever their number may have been, that each presented this triple form of gifts, "gold, frankincense," &c., as a public protestation of their faith in our Lord's kingly dignity, signified by "gold" in his Divinity; and Humanity signified by the "frankincense and myrrh." This would seem to be the more probable opinion. The first who held their number to be three was St. Leo (Sermons xxx. de Epiph.), if we, perhaps, except Maximus of Turin. Origen, it is almost certain, was of this opinion (in Gen. Hom. xiv. § 3). The ancient pictures or sculptures in use in the Roman Church, ages before St. Leo, always represented the number of Magi as three, and three only, which shows the opinion prevalent among the faithful of their time.

12. "*Having received an answer in sleep,*" it may be that the Magi consulted God in prayer as to their future course, and that they received an answer what to do, in order not to expose themselves or the holy infant to danger. The Greek word for "answer" (*χρηματισθετες*) however, merely signifies that they were favoured with a divine oracle, or intimation of the divine will, irrespective of their having consulted God or not on the subject. God, whether directly, as St. Jerome understands the Greek word always to mean, or through an angel, notified to them His will. This was a mode of ascertaining with certainty the divine will not unusual in the dealing of God with His creatures, as recorded in the Old Testament and the New. Whenever God is pleased thus to communicate His will, He places beyond all doubt, in whatever way may seem best to His infinite wisdom, that it is He that thus reveals Himself, so as to distinguish such communications from delusive phantoms or the other devices of the spirit of error. In obedience to the divine instructions, the Magi returned to their own country by a different *route* from that by which they came. It is remarked by expositors of SS. Scripture that this shows us how we are to return to our heavenly country, viz., in a way different from that by which we came, infected with the sin of the old Adam. The Magi ascend gradually higher in the scale of divine favour. First, they are conducted by a star of unusual brilliancy; next, they receive instruction through the oracles of the ancient Prophets; and finally, from God Himself.

13. "*And after they were departed,*" &c. There is a great diversity of opinion among commentators and critics regarding the time which intervened between the departure of the Magi and the flight into Egypt. Indeed all the hypotheses advanced hardly, at best, exceed probable conjecture. (vide Patrizzi, Lib. iii., Dissert. xxx., &c., de Evangelis. Mandiut, Dissert. iv., &c.) The most probable arrangement, and the one that will most easily reconcile the apparent discrepancy between St. Matthew here, and St. Luke (ii. 22-39), is effected by inserting in this place all

that is described by St. Luke in the above passage relative to the purification. After the purification, the holy family retired to Nazareth, their native place (Luke ii. 39). It was there the Angel appeared to Joseph, and from thence they fled into Egypt, in obedience to the Angel's admonition, in order, among a variety of other reasons, to be altogether outside the dominions of Herod. There is no real discrepancy between St. Matthew here and St. Luke; as the one only omits what the other describes. St. Matthew says nothing of the purification. St. Luke, on the other hand, says nothing of the flight into Egypt, described here by St. Matthew; one supplies what the other omits; without the slightest contradiction or discrepancy.

On this subject St. Augustine observes, "*that each Evangelist so interweaves his narrative as to present the appearance of a connected series of events, so arranged as to seem to omit nothing. For, while omitting what he means to pass over, he so connects what he wishes to express, that one event would seem to follow closely on the track of the other*" (De Comm. Evan. c. 5). At the same time, the Evangelist does not assert, that the events described immediately followed one another, or that other events did not intervene.

"*An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph.*" Whenever God deigns to manifest His divine will in sleep, or through the medium of dreams (a mode of making known the divine will, not unusual in the Old Testament), He so arranges it, that no doubt whatever of the real nature of the communication exists (see v. 20).

"*Arise, and take the child and His mother.*" On a former occasion, he called her "*thy wife*," at the time when Joseph had suffered much anxiety on account of her as his spouse. Now, all this anxiety being over, the Angel calls the Virgin mother by a higher and more exalted title, that of "*mother*" of the child, "*His mother*," Mother of God.

"*And fly into Egypt.*" Egypt was chosen as the place of safety, because being not very far from Palestine to the south, it was completely outside Herod's jurisdiction, and enjoyed an independent government, and also in order to the fulfilment of the prophecy of Osee referred to (in v. 15). For, the Israelites to whom the prophecy of Osee directly refers, had dwelt in Egypt 200 years, and having been brought forth from thence by Moses, were a type and figure of our Lord when brought from Egypt, and this typical relation is the more clearly perceived from the circumstance that it was through the blood of the Paschal Lamb they were delivered, which was a most expressive type of Christ. There are several other reasons for preferring Egypt for this honour of receiving our Lord, mentioned by commentators, which it is not necessary to refer to here in detail.

"*For it will come to pass,*" &c. Our Lord might have saved His Son from Herod's cruelty, by an effort of His power. Hence, as St. Fulgentius remarks, it was not from fear or necessity His flight proceeded, "*fugit non humana formidine sed dispensatione divina. Fugit, non necessitate, sed potestate.*" (Fulgentius de Epiph.). But the economy of God's wisdom would have it otherwise. He wished to give a proof of the human nature of His Son, which the exercise of Divine power in His infancy might give some grounds for doubting. He wished to show His power by weakness. His wisdom by folly, &c. (1 Cor. i.)

14. "*By night.*" The very same moment he received the Divine mandate, he obeyed, without any previous preparation for his journey. We see here the commendable faith, the blind, unhesitating, un murmuring, unquestioning obedience of

Joseph, his humble submission to, and reliance on, God's providence. Some expositors say it was to the event here recorded, the words of Isaiah (xix. 1) mystically refer: "*Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence,*" &c. These words, however, more appropriately refer to the threat of the Lord to punish the Egyptians by means of the Assyrians, whom He would send to execute vengeance, and utterly destroy their idols. Mystically, Egypt signifies the world, as St. Jerome teaches, in which idolatry was destroyed by Christ; and in the mystical sense, the passage quoted may be said to refer to our Lord's entrance into Egypt on this occasion, which may be said to denote that He would be received by the idolatrous nations, and that their false worship would be destroyed by Him. The fruits of mature sanctity, which so long distinguished Egypt in the numerous hermits, anchorites, and holy monks—these angels in the flesh—who peopled its deserts, such as the Pauls, the Antonies, the Macariuses, &c., may be fairly attributed to the early visit of the infant God to that country, which, together with Babylon, formed the great centre of infidelity and vice in ancient times. Historians and ecclesiastical writers narrate several wonderful occurrences which took place in Egypt on the occasion of this visit of the infant God. Among the rest, it is related by St. Jerome (*in Isaiam* xix. 1), that the idols of Egypt crumbled to pieces, at the entrance of our Saviour. The same is referred to by Rufinus and Palladius, as a very ancient tradition.

14. "*Till the death of Herod.*" Herod's death occurred after a reign of thirty-four years, from the death of Antigonus, and thirty-seven from the date of his appointment as king by the Romans (Josephus *Antiq. Lib.* xviii. c. 8; de Bello, *Lib.* c. 33). Nothing certain can be determined regarding the time our Lord spent in Egypt. Some say, three years; others, five; others, seven; others, eight.

15. "*That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke. . . Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*" The quotation referred to in this verse is taken from the prophet Osee (xi. 1), according to the Hebrew version, and the words immediately and literally refer to the Hebrew people, when leaving Egypt. Elsewhere, also, the Almighty calls the Hebrew people, His son. "*Israel is my son, my first-born*" (*Exod.* iv. 22). These words are not fulfilled in our Lord in the sense of their having originally and literally referred to Him, as the words of Micah are fulfilled in Him, "*Et tu Bethlehem, terra Juda,*" &c., because it was to Him these words of Micah refer, directly and exclusively; nor in the sense either that they mystically referred to Him, as the words, "*ego ero illi in patrem,*" &c., although originally referring to Solomon, were, in a mystical and more principal sense, fulfilled in Christ, in which sense also the words, "*os non comminuetis ex eo,*" mystically referred to Christ, and were principally intended by the sacred writer to be understood so. But, they were fulfilled in this sense, that what is said of "*Israel*" applies still more strictly and more accurately to Christ, inasmuch as He was, by excellence, "*the Son of God,*" just as the words spoken by Isaiah of the hypocrites of his time, "*populus hic labiis,*" &c., were verified in the hypocrites in the days of Christ, although Isaiah did not directly refer to them. In the same way, the prophecy of Isaiah (*Mat.* xiii. 14), "*hearing you shall hear,*" &c., although meant for the obstinate Jews of the days of Isaiah, was literally and equally true of the Jews, in the time of Christ. Hence, said to be predicted of them and verified in them. In this latter sense, the words, "*out of Egypt,*" &c., were fulfilled in the person of Christ; and in His recall from Egypt Israel may be also said to be, in a certain sense, a type of Christ; and hence

in this sense also, the prophecy might be said, in some respects, to be typically verified in Him.

16. Herod, seeing that the Magi did not return, very likely, conjectured that they saw through his wicked designs regarding the Divine infant. Ignorant of the heavenly guidance that directed them, he became exceedingly angry, and sending his executioners, he "*killed all the men children,*" &c. Most likely, for greater security' sake, he was influenced in extending the age of his intended victims to the period of "*two years,*" &c.—as he extended the place or area not only to Bethlehem, but to "*all the borders thereof*"—lest possibly the infant of whom so much was said in the prophecy of Micah, and by Simeon and Anna at His presentation in the temple (Luke ii. 25-38), might have attained a size and an amount of strength not attained ordinarily by children of His age. Probably Herod, engaged in important State business, either did not mind the lapse of many days, and the delay in the return of the *Magi*; or, if he did, most likely he thought that, disappointed in their search, they returned home without calling on him, according to promise, in order to escape the ridicule to which their disappointment in their foolish search might subject them. But when the account of the wonderful things that occurred at the presentation (Luke ii., &c.), reached his ears, he then clearly saw he was baffled by the Magi, who may have seen through his wicked designs, and this caused him to be enraged. Sending his soldiers or executioners, he slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem and in all its confines, including all those who had been two years old and under, up to the time he had ascertained the star to have appeared, according to the diligent inquiries made of the Magi. Probably, as Herod had extended the district, "*and all the confines thereof,*" so he also extended the age of his intended victims to the period of two years, for greater security' sake, lest, possibly, the infant might escape of whom so much was said both in the prophecy of Micah, and by Simeon and Anna, on the occasion of the Purification. He may have imagined that, possibly, the holy infant might have attained a size and strength too great for His age. Perhaps, He would be equal in both to children born nearly two years before Him. From the words of this verse, some commentators suppose that the star appeared to the Magi, *two years before*, the infant was born. But, manifestly, the Magi regarded the star as the sign of the King already born, rather than of one to be born, "*qui natus est rex,*" &c. Others say, the Magi did not reach Bethlehem for two years after the apparition of the star, which was the cause why Herod fixed on the period of "*two years.*" But it is very unlikely that Mary and Joseph remained so long in Bethlehem; although, indeed, we are not bound by anything mentioned in the Gospels to believe that the *Magi* adored him in Bethlehem any more than at Nazareth. For, although Herod directed them to go to Bethlehem, it may be that the guiding star led them elsewhere. However, the common opinion is, that the Magi came *shortly* after our Lord's birth, and the murder of the children; "*and two years old*" may be accounted for on the grounds already assigned. The words, "*according to the time,*" &c., are to be connected not with the words of preceding sentence, "*from two years old,*" but, rather with the words, "*and under,*" as if he said; he slew all the children who were two years old and under that age, up to the time that, by diligent inquiry, he ascertained from the Magi that the star appeared, so that, as he regarded the apparition of the star as a certain sign that the infant was then born, fierce as he was, he did not indulge in the gratuitous cruelty of slaughtering all the male children of Bethlehem, including those who were only a few days old. He excepted from this, the children born *after* the appearance of the star. Hence, the words, "*according to,*" &c.,

mean, *up to*, the time he ascertained the star to have appeared. Although this cruel deed on the part of Herod is passed over in silence by Josephus, it is mentioned by Celsus, against whom Origen wrote (*Contra Celsum*, Lib. i. n. 48), by Justin, in his Dialogue with Typhron the Jew. Josephus himself admits that Herod was becoming every day more suspicious and cruel. He slew his son-in-law, Josippus; his beloved wife, Mariamne; his sons, Alexander and Aristobulus; his third son, Antipater. The omission on the part of Josephus cannot be of any weight against the positive testimony of St. Matthew, who described this cruel deed shortly after it occurred. Macrobius also (Lib. ii. Saturnal, c. 10) mentions, among the many witty sayings of Augustus, that on hearing that, together with the children whom Herod killed in Syria from two years old, he ordered his own son Antipater to be put to death (he had already slain Alexander and Aristobulus), Augustus observed, "it was better to be Herod's *hog* than his *son*," in allusion to the law among the Jews regarding unclean meats, swine's flesh among the rest.

At what time this infanticide took place is disputed. Some say, shortly after the departure of the Magi, towards the next Pasch, which occurred in March, for it was then, they say, Herod died in the thirty-seventh year of his reign, having a few (five) days previously put his son, Antipater, to death on a charge of plotting against himself and his reign. Others, and among them A. Lapide, say, it occurred fully twelve months and more after they departed, about the fifteenth month of our Lord's age, and these say that the words, "*a bimatu et infra*," mean, that Herod put to death only the children who attained the second year of their age or thereabouts, more or less, say, fifteen months, according to the time he ascertained the star to have appeared to the Magi.

17. "*Then was fulfilled*," &c. The words of Jeremias (xxxi. 15), here quoted, are not so much "*a prophecy*" in regard to the event to which they originally referred, viz., the abduction of the ten tribes into captivity, as a narrative of a past event. In the prophecy of Jeremias, mention is made of the tribe of Ephraim only, from which Jeroboam, their first king, had sprung. It was the chief of the ten tribes that were carried into captivity. Rachel, the grandmother of Ephraim, then in her grave, is, by a bold figure of speech, represented by Jeremias, as deploring and loudly bewailing her children as they passed by her tomb into captivity, in order to convey an idea of the sad fate and misfortunes that awaited them in a strange land. Here the Evangelist, accommodating the words of Jeremias to his present purpose, says his words are fulfilled in the slaughter of the Holy Innocents, inasmuch as a similar, or rather a greater, cause for mourning has arisen in Israel under Herod, more calculated still to cause lamentation than the abduction of the ten tribes—the cause of the lamentation referred to by Jeremias. St. Matthew compares what happened now under Herod, with what happened on the occasion referred to by Jeremias. Between both there existed the mere relation of similarity. Under the type of the former calamity, the Holy Ghost wishes, in that passage of Jeremias, to denote the slaughter of all the martyrs, and the wailing of their mother, the Church—signified by Rachel—over the first fruits, or rather *flowers*, as the Church terms them, of all the martyrs put to death for Christ. "*Salvete flores martyrum*" (Hymn in Festo SS. Innocentium).

"*Rachel*," the mother of Benjamin, was buried near Bethlehem, on the confines of Juda and Benjamin; and as the people of Juda and Benjamin were interspersed in that district, near Bethlehem, Rachel, although not the mother of Juda, is still said to mourn all the children; of whom those of Benjamin, "*in the confines of Bethlehem*,"

formed a part. Moreover, both Juda and Benjamin formed one kingdom, so that what happened one might be said to be common to the other.

Rachel "*would not be comforted, because they are not.*" These words mean, in reference to the Israelites led into captivity, that those taken away were to remain in captivity, far away from the land of their fathers. In reference to the Holy Innocents, they mean, without taking at all into account the crowns of immortal glory in store for them, "that they are not in life, having been put to death." In both the Hebrew and Septuagint of Jeremias, we have "lamentation, and weeping, and mourning"—three terms. In St. Matthew only two—"lamentation and great mourning." Probably, St. Matthew, only quoted the substance of Jeremias, and the word "*great*" may be said to convey the idea of "*weeping*" expressed in Jeremias.

"*In Rama.*" "*Rama*" means "*high*." Hence, St. Jerome, understanding it of any *high* place, makes it a common noun—"a voice was heard *on high*" (Jer. xxxi. 15). The Greek interpreter of St. Matthew, following the Septuagint on Jeremias, makes a proper name—"a voice was heard *in Rama*"—a city in the tribe of Benjamin, seven miles from Bethlehem, near Gabaa, on the confines of Juda and Benjamin. The words convey an idea of the loud wail which was heard seven miles off, reaching from Juda to Benjamin, showing their common grief. The version of St. Jerome conveys the same idea—A wail was heard on high, and ascended aloft. It may be allusive to the usages of the Jews, who, on mourning occasions, were wont to ascend high mountains, to wail and express their deep grief.

TEXT.

19. *But when Herod was dead, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, in Egypt.*

20. *Saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child.*

21. *Who arose, and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.*

22. *But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither: and being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee.*

23. *And coming, he dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which said by the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene.*

COMMENTARY.

19. "*But when Herod was dead.*" The period of our Lord's sojourn in Egypt must depend on the period of Herod's death. This is very uncertain. Josephus (De Bel. Jud. Lib. i. c. 33), says that he reigned thirty-seven years, from the time he was first appointed king by the Romans, and thirty-four, from the time he slew Antigonus. From this, some infer that whereas Christ was born in the thirty-second year of Herod's reign, and, most likely, went into Egypt in the first year of His birth, He remained about five years in Egypt, and returned the fifth or sixth of His age. These several epochs are disputed by others. Hence, we can determine nothing with absolute certainty on this point. After Herod, no one else was appointed king of Judea—it would seem, by Divine dispensation, the true King of the Jews being now born, who returns to His kingdom on the death of the intruder, by whom was wielded the sceptre which had now passed away from Juda. Herod's end was most frightful. He died of a complication of most loathsome diseases, and the excruciating tortures in which he closed his wicked life must be regarded as a just punishment for his crimes. Josephus describes his last days (De Antiq. Lib. xvii. c. 6.; De Jud. Lib. i. c. 33). The same historian informs us that, shortly before his death, he meditated

a horrible deed of cruelty. He caused to be collected all the chief men among the Jews into one place, called the Hippodrome, and had them guarded there. He then gave instructions to his sister, Salome, and to her husband, Alexas, to have them all slaughtered immediately after his death, so that all Judea and every family among the Jews, to whom he suspected his death would be the cause of great joy, would be plunged into mourning on that occasion (Josephus de Bel. Jud., Lib. i. c. 31).

20. The Angel does not tell Joseph into what part of "*the land of Israel*" he is to go, in order that, being left still in doubt, he would have occasion to consult God, and be consoled by the further manifestation of the care which God had of himself and the child.

"*They are dead.*" He refers to Herod, as is clear from the words (v. 19), "*Now Herod being dead.*" It is to him the Angel refers. The plural, by a Hebrew idiom, is used for the singular, a thing quite common in the SS. Scriptures. Thus (Exod. xxxii. 4), we find, "*hi sunt Dei tui*," &c., although only one golden calf was made. Also (Exod. iv.), the Lord, addressing Moses, says, "*mortui sunt qui quarant animam tuam*," although, as we are told (c. ii.), only Pharaoh sought his life. Similar words are employed by the Lord, in calling back His Son from Egypt, to those addressed to Moses, who, as a deliverer, was an expressive type of Christ. Similar is the phrase, "*dedit terra ranas in penetralibus regum ipsorum*" (Psa. civ.), although there is question of Pharaoh only. Also "*scriptum est in prophetis; erunt docibiles Dei*," found in one prophet only (Isa. liv. 13, and in the Acts xiii. 41). What is spoken by only one prophet, Habacuc (i. 5), is said to be spoken "*in the prophets.*" So it is also here in the case of Herod.

21. "*And came into the land of Israel.*" He came first to that portion of it nearest Egypt, viz., a portion of the tribe of Dan or Simeon.

22. Archelaus was appointed king in his father's will, subject to the approval of Augustus Cæsar, who constituted him ethnarch of one-half of the country over which Herod, his father, ruled, with a promise of making him king hereafter, if he deserved it. The other half, Cæsar divided, and gave to two other of Herod's sons, Philip and Antipas. It was this Antipas, that disputed with Archelaus for the whole kingdom (Josephus Ant., Lib. xvii. c. 11). When, then, the Evangelist says, "*he reigned in Judea*," it merely signifies that he exercised supreme civil power there, although he had not at the time the name or title of king. "*In Judea*"—inhabited by Juda and Benjamin; so called to distinguish it from the kingdom of Israel, inhabited by the ten separated tribes. The fact of his being constituted king in his father's will, and being saluted as such by the soldiers and people, on his father's death, would warrant the impression that he reigned there.

It may be that Joseph returned from Egypt shortly after Herod's death, before Archelaus set out for Rome to see Cæsar, to justify his conduct, and obtain the ratification by Cæsar of his father's will. It was not unusual with Hebrew and Greek writers to designate those as "*kings*," in a wider signification of the term, who enjoyed any principality, even beneath the kingly dignity. Archelaus was ultimately banished by Cæsar into Gaul.

"*He was afraid to go thither.*" It may be that Joseph, on his return, was desirous to go to the Temple of Jerusalem, to return God thanks, before finally returning to his native dwelling-place of Nazareth. But, owing to the well-known cruel

disposition of Archelaus, which afterwards cost him his crown (Josephus Antiq., Lib. xvii. c. 15), he feared to go there. It might be that Joseph, in his anxiety and apprehension for the safety of his heavenly charge, feared that the child would be recognised, owing to the occurrences which took place at Bethlehem and Jerusalem at his presentation; and he could expect no mercy from the wicked Archelaus, the worthy heir and rival of his father's cruelties. Joseph naturally feared, he would not be safe anywhere within the dominions of Archelaus. It is related, as an instance of Archelaus' cruelty, that he put to death, or rather cut to pieces, several thousands of the Jews in the temple, at the Paschal festival (Josephus, Lib. xvii. c. 9). Hence, being "warned in sleep" (*χρηματισθείς* means, *receiving a Divine oracle*), "Joseph retired into the quarters of Galilee," where Herod Antipas, a prince of milder disposition, ruled, and where the circumstances of the child's birth were not so well known.

23. "Nazareth"—an obscure town at the foot of Mount Tabor, where nothing was known of the extraordinary events connected with the birth of our Lord, and where He could not be suspected of being one of the infants sought for in Bethlehem. This was supposed to be the birth-place of the Blessed Virgin, where she resided when she received the message of the Angel (Luke i. 26), and where our Saviour "was brought up" (Luke iv. 16). No cause for jealousy on the part of the Herods could be apprehended from this quarter, out of which it was not thought anything good could come (John i. 46). It was a fit asylum for the infant Saviour.

"That it might be fulfilled . . . that He shall be called a Nazarite." "That," denotes the event or consequence, as if he said, from this resulted the fulfilment of the words of the prophets regarding Him, "That he shall be called," &c. This passage has been a source of perplexity to commentators, who cannot find, either in the writings of the Prophets in general, or of any one amongst them in particular, that our Redeemer would be called a Nazarene or Nazarite at all, or that He would be called so from the place of His education. St. Jerome (Epist. xx. ad Damasum), says, "*We cannot find it either in the Greek or Latin copies.*" He writes to the same effect (in Isa. xi.), and in his commentary on this passage (Matthew ii.), he says, "*that the Evangelist, by using the word 'Prophets' in the plural number, unmistakably conveys, that he quotes not the exact words, but the sense of the prophecies which regarded Christ.*"

The question which creates the great difficulty here is, where was it prophesied of Christ that "He would be called a Nazarene?" Commentators are divided in accounting for this. One class say, if the original Hebrew word for "Nazarene" be written with a Zain (ז) *Nezir*, then the word Nazarene will signify *holy, consecrated, or set apart*. Now, throughout the entire Scriptures, particularly the prophetic writings, our Lord is spoken of as holy by excellence. Thus, St. Jerome (*in hunc locum*) says, "Nazarene" is interpreted, *holy*. The appellation of Nazarene was given to the most distinguished types of our Lord—Samson (Judg. xv.), Joseph (Gen. xlix. 26)—on account of their being separated from the people by their distinguished virtues, and, as such, types of Christ. According to these interpreters, it was the result of God's wonderful providence that our Lord, by reason of His education at Nazareth, would be called "*a Nazarene.*" He was called so, no doubt, out of contempt by the Jews. But it was a title of dignity given by God, expressive of His incomparable sanctity, His eternal consecration in the intrinsic nature of the Divinity by which His human nature was assumed to a personal union. This interpretation is adopted by Tertullian. (Lib. iv. *Adversus Marcionem*; Eusebius Demon. Evangel.; St. Jerome in c. ii. Matt., &c.) To this interpretation might be added, that the appellation of "Nazarene" applied to

Samson, &c., who were types of Christ, was verified and fulfilled in Him, as the antitype, when, from the place of His education, He was called a Nazarene, sometimes out of contempt.

The generality of commentators, however, understand the allusion to be to the words of Isaiah (xi. 1), "*There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.*" The holy Fathers, all Catholics, the most distinguished Jewish expositors of Scripture, the chiefs of the Rationalistic school, among them Rosenmüller, say, these words refer to Christ. St. Jerome tells us that in the original the word for "*flower*" signifies a *Nazarite*, so that the passage should be literally and strictly rendered, "*a rod . . . and a Nazarite (Netzer) from his root.*" In this the word is written not by Zain (ר) *Nezir*, as is supposed in the former interpretation, but by Psade (צ) *Netzer*, a flower or other "*bud*." It, moreover, is against the former interpretation, that the word "*Nazarene*," as applied to the types of our Lord, Samson, &c., is written in the Septuagint, Ναζαπαῖος; whereas, as applied to Christ, it is everywhere written in the New Testament with an ω, Ναζωπαῖος. Hence, in this interpretation, the Evangelist means to convey that our Lord had chosen Nazareth for his dwelling and place of education, in order that from this would appear that the title or epithet of "*flower*" or *bud* (*Netzer*) given Him by the prophet Isaiah (xi. 1), was fully verified in Him. The Jews called Him a "*Nazarene*," out of contempt, as a term of reproach. But, to the believers who saw in the appellation a fulfilment of what was, in substance at least, if not in express terms, predicted of Him by the Prophets, it served as a further confirmation of their faith. The word, *Prophets*, although, according to this latter interpretation, referring to Isaiah only, is, according to Jewish usage, used in the plural for the singular. The words, "*to be called*," are frequently used to express, and are synonymous with, "*shall be*" (Eccles. vi. 10; Isa. xiv. 20; Luke ii. 23). Hence, here the words mean, "*He shall be a Nazarene*," as was predicted by Isaiah regarding Him.

CHAPTER III.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist describes the preaching of John the Baptist in the desert, inculcating penance by word and example, thus preparing the way of the Lord, as was predicted regarding Him by the prophet Isaiah (1-4). The crowds that flocked from Jerusalem to hear him and receive his baptism (5-6). His severe animadversions on the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were conspicuous among those who flocked to hear him, and his earnest exhortations to them to enter sincerely on the exercises of penance (7-8). The reasons assigned by the Baptist why they should not glory inordinately in their carnal descent from Abraham (9-10). The superiority of Christ's Divine person and baptism, over himself and the baptism he administered (11). Our Lord's judicial power and the severity of His punishment on obstinate, unrepenting sinners (12). The arrival of our Lord at the place where baptism was administered, for the purpose of receiving baptism from John, who modestly and humbly would decline so great a privilege until, yielding to our Lord's wishes, he baptizes Him (13-16). The heavenly manifestations on the occasion of our Lord's baptism, viz., the appearance of the Holy Ghost on the opening of the heavens, in the form of a dove descending on our Lord, and the voice of the Heavenly Father proclaiming Him from heaven to be His eternal, consubstantial Son (16-17).

TEXT.

NOW in those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the desert of Judea.

2. And saying: Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3. For this is he that was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying: A voice of one crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

4. And the same John had his garment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

5. *Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country about Jordan :*
6. *And were baptized by him in the Jordan confessing their sins.*
7. *And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them : Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come.*
8. *Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance.*
9. *And think not to say within yourselves : We have Abraham for our father. For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Now, in those days.*" "*Now*" has a transitive signification, expressing a transition from the narrative regarding one subject to another.

"*Those days*" refer to the time of our Lord's dwelling in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph (c. ii. 23). St. Luke (c. iii. 1) is more circumstantial and detailed in describing the precise time. He notes the rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, by whom the Jewish people were then governed. The words do not always imply that the matter about to be narrated occurred immediately after the event previously narrated. Here an interval of twenty years elapsed between the events narrated (c. ii. 23, and c. iii. 1). St. Matthew says nothing of our Lord's infancy, or of the time of His abode at Nazareth, where He lived "*subject*" to Joseph and Mary (Luke ii. 51). Probably, he may have had no certain knowledge of the events of these periods; and moreover, they had nothing to do with the establishment of the "*Kingdom of Heaven,*" which he undertook to chronicle.

"*Came,*" publicly appeared.

"*John the Baptist,*" so styled from his office, divinely committed to him, of baptizing and of preaching the Baptism of Penance, as a preparation for the public appearance of the Son of God. Had our Lord not sent John to prepare the way and dispose the people to receive Him, He might be rejected altogether.

"*Preaching,*" delivering discourses on the necessity of Penance and Baptism as a preparation for the due reception of the Son of God.

"*In the desert of Judea.*" Origen, Nicephorus, Baronius, St. Jerome, &c., assure us, that while yet in his infancy, the Baptist was carried into the desert and concealed by his mother, Elizabeth, in the fissures of the rocks, to escape the cruelty of Herod, who, on account of the remarkable circumstances which attended his birth, and the declaration that he was to precede the Messiah, would not fail to secure his person, although outside his jurisdiction, and put him to death. Cedrenus (in *Compendio Historiæ*) informs us that forty days after their flight Elizabeth died, and that the child was cared by angels. It is more likely that this office was performed by some attendant of Elizabeth.

Independently of the above testimony, and the words of St. Luke (c. i. 80), the very food and clothing of the Baptist would show that it was not in his father's house, which was in the *mountains*, and not in the *desert*, of Judea, he led the austere life which fitted him to be afterwards the first preacher of penance, and was calculated to ensure him, owing to his retired holy life, living apart from men, and communing with God and His holy angels, that heroic sanctity which was suited to the office of the precursor of the world's Redeemer. In this vast, wild solitude, he grew up till the term of "*his manifestation to Israel*" (Luke i. 80). From the interior of this desert, he came forth to the country about the Jordan, which, on account of its being thinly inhabited, is called "*the desert of Judea.*" In this way, is the narrative of St. Luke, who implies that John came from the desert into the country about the Jordan to preach, &c. (c. iii. 3), reconciled with that of Mark and Matthew, who say, he

preached in "*the desert of Judea*." St. Luke refers to the vast desert where he resided. From that he came to preach. Matthew and Mark speak of the confines of the desert, where it was partly inhabited, on the banks of the Jordan. This desert was on this side of the Jordan, between the east and north, at the extremity of which were Ennon and Salim, where John was in the habit of baptizing (John iii. 23).

It was meet that John should preach in the desert, and not the temple, which was reserved for Christ, of whom it was predicted, "*Statim veniet ad templum suum Dominator*," &c. (Mal. iii. 1), in order that the commencement of the New Law should correspond with the giving of the Old, which took place in the desert of Sinai. The Baptist is called by St. Chrysostom, owing to the life which he led, "*the Prince of an Eremitical life*" (Hom. in Matt., also St. Jerome in Vita Pauli).

The Baptist, as well as our Redeemer, prepared themselves in solitude for the great mission intrusted to them, till they reached the age of thirty. No one, as we learn from Jewish tradition and authorities—and, indeed, it is inferred from 1 Par. xxiii. 3—could undertake earlier the office of priest or teacher among the Jews. At this time, our Redeemer was "*about the age of thirty years*" (Luke iii. 23), having up to this, exercised the humble trade of carpenter in His home at Nazareth with Joseph—"*Is not this the carpenter*" (Mark vi. 3), "*and the carpenter's son?*" (Matt. xiii. 55)—to leave us an example of humility, and inculcate the necessity of a long course of retired and silent preparation for such as would exercise profitably the exalted functions of the sacred ministry of the New Law.

2. "*And saying: Do penance.*" This is the theme with which our Redeemer also commenced His preaching (c. iv. 17). Looking to strict etymology, the Greek word for "*do penance*" (μετανοεῖτε) means a "*change of heart and thought*." But, looking to what the term involves, the meaning attached to it by our Lord and His precursor is clearly and fully expressed by our Vulgate, *penitentiam agite*, "*do penance*," implying the performance of penitential works. For, the Baptist explains it by saying (v. 8), "*bring forth fruit worthy of penance*." Our Lord Himself, when speaking of the Ninevites—these model penitents whom He praises—tells us, "*they did penance* (μετενοήσαν) *at the preaching of Jonas*" (Matt. xii. 41). Jonas describes what this penance so much commended by the Son of God consisted in, viz., in fasting and other rigorous bodily austerities. (Jonas iii. 6, &c.) St. Paul (2 Cor vii. 9, &c.), describes penance (μετανοία) as involving, besides sorrow of heart, penitential works as its necessary complement. He distinguishes between "*sorrow*" and "*penance*" as between cause and effect. "*You are made sorrowful unto Penance, the sorrow that is according to God worketh Penance steadfast unto salvation*," &c. And he next points out the works which this steadfast salutary penance involves. Here, it involves the reception of John's baptism and confession of sins as offences to God, excluding men from entering His kingdom. Penance, therefore, besides a sorrow of heart, embraces penitential works also. The Vulgate rendering of μετανοεῖτε in this passage has this advantage, that it more clearly conveys the true Catholic doctrine on the subject of penitential works, which are in every part of Scripture connected with the word, μετανοεῖτε (Joel ii. ; Matt. xi.) "*penitentiam egissent* (μετενοήσαν) *in cinere et cilicio*." If the word merely meant change of mind or *resipiscentia*, it might be rendered in this passage, "*they would have changed their mind in sackcloth and ashes*," which would be nothing short of ridiculous.

It is, however, a matter of perfect indifference, so far as the revealed Catholic doctrine regarding penitential works is concerned, whether μετανοεῖτε be rendered "*do penance*," or "*repent*," as it is rendered (Mark i. 15). The necessity of penitential

works, as the necessary complement of the virtue of penance, is no way affected by it. For, as Dr. Kenrick well remarks (General Introduction to the Epistles, &c.), "Penitential works are necessary, not because the Vulgate has '*pœnitentiam agite*,' or the Rhemish interpreter says, '*do penance*;' but, because such works have been inculcated under the Old dispensation and the New, in the Scriptures and the Fathers, as evidences and fruits of compunction."

"*The kingdom of heaven*." These words are not found in the Old Testament, and this is the first place in the New where they are found. They are peculiar to St. Matthew, in the New. "*Kingdom of God*" is the form used by the other Evangelists to convey the same idea. (Mark i. 15; Luke vi. 20, &c.)

"*The kingdom of God*" is called "*the kingdom of heaven*," heaven being the chief and noblest part of God's dominions, where He holds His heavenly court and manifests Himself to the blessed.

"*The kingdom of heaven*," or "*of God*," has different significations in the New Testament. Sometimes, it denotes the reign of Christ in our hearts by His grace (Luke xvii. 21). Sometimes, His Church on earth (Matt. xxv. 1; xxi. 43; Col. i. 13, &c.; Rom. xiv. 17). Sometimes, the place of eternal beatitude for those who reign with God and His saints in glory. To this the reign of Christ on earth, whether in the hearts of the faithful or in His Church, is the threshold and necessary entrance.

"*The kingdom of heaven*" here *directly* refers to the kingdom of God's glory, and *indirectly* to His kingdom or Church on earth, which was to be established by Christ as the necessary threshold or entrance to the former kingdom; also the consequent reign of Christ by grace in our hearts. No one can enter the *sanctum sanctorum* of heaven, who has not passed, in some sense, through the *sanctum* of God's Church on earth, and experienced the reign of Christ in his heart.

These several meanings may be united here. The long-expected reign of the Messiah, in His glorious kingdom, which is not earthly, as the carnal Jews expected; but heavenly, "*is at hand*," is now about to be opened by the blood of Christ—a kingdom into which "*nothing defiled can enter*;" therefore, it is, I exhort you, who are sinners, to blot out your sins and correct your bad habits by the salutary exercises of penance, if you wish to be partakers of the glory of this kingdom. Or, the reign of the Messiah in His Church is just now about to be universally established, wherein He is to reign in the hearts of His faithful people. This Church is the threshold of the kingdom of His glory, soon to be opened. In order that you may be properly disposed to be aggregated to this Church, and also to experience Christ's peaceful reign within you by His grace and heavenly consolations, you must first prepare yourselves by the exercise of penance.

3. "*For this is He that was spoken of*," &c. These words are commonly understood to be the words, not of the Baptist in continuation of his sermon, but of the Evangelist, historically describing and applying to the mission of the Baptist the prophecy of Isaias. Thus is shown that John preached in the desert, by Divine commission, and not from human delegation or natural impulse, since it was of him Isaias had spoken long beforehand, as destined to raise his voice in the desert and exhort the people to prepare for the coming of the Son of God.

"*A voice* (shall be heard) *of one crying in the desert*," &c. These words are understood by some commentators to refer, in their *primary historical sense*, to the messengers who were to announce to the Jewish people their return from captivity; and in their *secondary sense*—which was the chief meaning intended by the Holy Ghost—to the preaching of the Baptist. The whole context of Isaias (c. xl.) renders it



more likely that, even in their primary sense, they refer to the Baptist. For, some passages in this 40th chap. of Isaias could hardly apply to the return from captivity, and can be only understood of the blessings brought us by Christ, of whom the Baptist was the precursor.

"*A voice of one crying*" (*vox clamantis*) may refer to the voice of the Baptist himself. He was the voice of a herald proclaiming, by Divine commission, the liberation of God's people from the servitude of sin and Satan; or, to the voice of God, whose herald he was. Hence, he says of himself, "*I am the voice of one crying*," &c. (John i. 23), as if he said, "I am he, of whom it is written, "*A voice of one crying in the wilderness*" (shall be heard). The Hebrew, *Kol-Kore*, may be also rendered, "*a voice crying*" (*vox clamans*), in which rendering, the distinction marked by the holy Fathers between John and Christ is quite intelligible. John was the *voice*—a mere inarticulate sound—Christ, the *Word*, for which the voice is the preparation (Epiph. Heresi 69).

The words are given in Isaias (c. xl.) as a proof, that God's anger was appeased; because the voice of a herald calling on the people to prepare for the coming of the Lord shall be heard from the desert, &c.

The words of the Evangelist convey the sense of the Prophet, although the reading here slightly differs from the Septuagint, as well as from the Hebrew of Isaias (c. xl.).

Some commentators detach the words, "*in the desert*," from the foregoing, and join them to what follows, "*A voice of one crying out; in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord*," &c., to correspond with the following words of Isaias (xl. 3), "*make straight in the wilderness, the paths of our God*." But it is clear from the words of the Evangelist here, also (c. xi. 7), that it was in the desert John preached, and in the desert the voice of the preacher was heard. Hence, "*in the desert*" should be joined to the preceding, "*a voice crying in the desert*."

"*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*," is allusive to the Eastern custom of sending out men at the approach of kings or princes to prepare the roads, and remove every obstruction from the way by which they were to pass. Here the words mean, remove every obstruction that may prove offensive to the eyes of our Lord at His coming. Sin, the gratification of passion, occasions of sin—obstacles most offensive to God—should be deserted; and to effect this they should perform suitable penitential works, as a reparation for the past, as preparative dispositions for present grace, and as means to prevent relapse in future. "*Do penance*;" "*bring forth fruit worthy of penance*," inculcated by the Baptist, are the same in sense, as the words of Isaias, "*prepare the way of the Lord*," or rather, the former is but the application of the latter.

The Evangelist quotes Isaias in order to show the Jews, how inexcusable they were in not receiving Him, whose immediate precursor appeared among them, and had fulfilled in himself all that had been predicted, ages before, regarding him by one of their own prophets, both as to the time and place of his preaching the preparation of the way of the Lord, who was just coming after him.

4. This is added to show that the costume and manner of life of this first preacher of penance was perfectly in unison with his preaching, so that his life as well as his preaching would inspire contempt for the luxuries and pleasures of this life, and raise up men's hearts to heavenly enjoyments. "*Camel's hair*," not fine camlet, which would not be in keeping with the Baptist's austerity; but, rough cloth woven from camel's hair, calculated to mortify the flesh by its pungency. Some say, it was a camel's skin, with the hair on it. "*Leathern girdle*." The Easterns wore loose flowing robes, and used girdles to gather them up round the body, lest they might obstruct them in journeying. While others used girdles of silk, wool, or cotton, John used

this rough kind of girdle to press the coarse camel's hair closer to his body. In this he resembles Elias, who is described as similarly clad (4 Kings i. 8).

"*Locusts.*" Regarding these, the most probable opinion is that they refer to these well-known small insects reckoned among the clean animals with the Jews (Lev. xi. 22). St. Jerome (Lib. contra Jovinianum) tells us that the Eastern people used to feed on locusts. They salted and dried them, and afterwards used them as food (Pliny, Lib. vi. c. 30). The poor only used them.

"*Wild honey,*" deposited by the wild bees in the trees and clefts of the rocks, not so savoury as other descriptions of honey. His drink was, most probably, water, plentifully found in the desert, a drink in keeping with the coarse food he used. It was said of him, "*He shall drink no wine nor any strong drink*" (Luke i. 15).

5. "*Jerusalem and all Judea.*" An hyperbolical form of expression, conveying the idea that very large numbers from Jerusalem and the parts of Judea adjoining the Jordan went out to hear the Baptist, attracted by the holy austerity of his life and his style of preaching, which may have vividly recalled to their minds the circumstances accompanying his birth. Possibly, they may have had some vague notions that he was their long-expected Messiah, whose advent was anxiously looked forward to at this time (John i. 19, 20, &c.; Luke iii. 15).

6. "*Baptized,*" strictly means, *washing*, particularly by immersion or plunging into water, the form used by the Jews, and the form of conferring Christian baptism in use in the early Church. This mode of conferring baptism being a mere matter of discipline, has been, for good reasons, since exchanged for that of infusion (Peronne De Baptismo). The baptism of John did not remit sin of itself, like the baptism of Christ. It only disposed men for that of Christ, and was an external sign of penance whereby men declared that they wished their souls to be cleansed from sin in a way analogous to the cleansing of the body by water. The Council of Trent (§§ vii. Can. 1 de Baptis.) defines it to be believed, under pain of anathema, "that the baptism of John and that of Christ had not the same force or efficacy." According to the general opinion of the Fathers, the difference consisted in this; that John's baptism neither remitted sins of itself by conferring sanctifying grace, nor impressed a character like that of Christ (St. Jerome, contra Lucifer; Greg. Great, Homil. 7 and 10 in Evang.; St. Leo, Epist. iv., cap. 6; St. Augustine, L. de Baptismo, Lib. v., contra Donatistas; St. Thomas, Part 3, Quest. 38, Article 6). St. Paul baptizes again those who received the baptism of John (Acts xix. 5).

The definition of the Council of Trent was levelled at the Reformers, who denied that there was any difference between both baptisms, because, according to them, no sacrament confers grace of itself; all sacraments are but signs or seals of the justice which comes through faith, and faith alone. Whether John's baptism was a sacrament or not, is disputed. If we take the word sacrament, in its general acceptation, to denote "*a divinely instituted sign of a sacred thing,*" it may be regarded as a sacrament. In this general signification, the word, sacrament, would embrace all the rites and ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Law. The baptism of John not only contained an exhortation to penance; but, it also prepared for and prefigured the baptism of Christ. Hence, termed by St. Augustine (Lib. ii, contra Petilianum), "*sacramentum lavaeri præcursorium.*" It was neither a sacrament, strictly speaking, of the Old Law nor of the New, but held a middle place between both. It expressly typified the baptism of Christ, as the sacrifice of Melchisedech typified the sacrifice of the Mass, both these types having the same matter as their antitypes. It is held by some that the same form was used by John in his baptism; and, in reply to the argument from the

words of St. Paul (Acts xix. 4), "*that they should believe in Him who was to come after him,*" they say, these words contained no form, but only the subject of John's preaching in general. They add, that the Greek clearly favours this view. Others maintain that the words just quoted (Acts xix. 4), clearly prove that John baptized "*in the name of Him who was to come after him,*" and required, as a condition, that those baptized should believe in Him.

"*Confessing their sins.*" A similar form of expression (*ἐξομολογουμεν*) is used in the Acts of the Apostles (xix. 18), and there it clearly means, not that they confessed themselves to be sinners; but, that they confessed their sins in detail. For, by way of explaining what the word "*confessing*" meant, it is added, "*and declaring their deeds.*" Hence, here the word means, that they confessed their sins, at least the more grievous ones, in detail, as a sign of sincere penance, which dictates a horror, an aversion, and sorrow for sin, and urges the penitent sinner to unburden himself of the heavy weight of sin, and thus relieve his mind, by externally disclosing it to him from whom he expects consolation and remission, as the patient hesitates not to disclose his ailment to his physician. If the interior compunction reach the intensity of charity, it remits sin; if not, it disposes for the remission of sin.

The rite of confessing certain sins in particular, was practised among the Jews, and prescribed by the law of Moses. In Leviticus (v. 4, 5), it is said of the person that sweareth . . . v. 5, "*Let him do penance for his sins.*" In the Hebrew, for "*do penance,*" it is, "*let him confess what he sinned.*" Also, Numbers (v. 7), "*They shall confess their sins.*" The fact of confessing that they were sinners, would involve no humiliation or mortification (for all must confess that they are such); and hence, it would hardly warrant the Evangelist in referring to it here, as an act of penance which the Baptist inculcates; or, as any of "*the fruits worthy of penance,*" which, no doubt, many of them brought forth. Besides, as Grotius well observes, the phrase, "*confessing themselves sinners,*" is quite different from the phrase, "*confessing their sins.*" The latter manifestly involves the exposure of sin in particular and in detail. This passage has nothing to do with the necessity of confession in the Sacrament of Penance, the proof of which consists in this, viz., that those on whom our Lord conferred the twofold power of binding and loosing—"whose sins you shall forgive . . . and whose sins ye shall retain," &c. (John xx. 23)—namely, the Apostles and their successors, could not exercise this power, as it was meant they should exercise it, so as to ensure its being ratified "*in heaven,*" viz., as just judges and faithful dispensers of God's mysteries, without confession of his sins by the penitent. For, how could they exercise this twofold power of binding and loosing except they fully knew the nature of the cause, and the dispositions of the subject, on whom this judicial power was to be exercised, not capriciously or arbitrarily, but with discretion? Now, the cause in many instances embraces private sins of thought, known to God alone; sins against the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, which could not be known for adjudication, either as to number or magnitude, save through the confession of the penitent himself; nor could the inward dispositions necessary for pardon, so as to have the sentence passed on earth ratified "*in heaven,*" be known through any other source besides. Hence, the necessity of confession clearly involved in the twofold power of loosing as well as binding given by our Lord to His Church.

7. "*And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees,*" &c. These were the two leading sects among the Jews. There was a third leading sect—the *Essenes*. These three sects were first heard of in the time of the Machabees. The *Pharisees* were so called from the Hebrew word *Parash* (*he separated*), because they regarded themselves as

separated from the bulk of the people on account of their superior sanctity, their more accurate knowledge and religious observance of the law. They taught several traditions not in accordance with God's law, as we see from several parts of the Gospel. They believed in the Resurrection—the immortality and transmigration of souls (Josephus de Bel.; Jud. Lib. ii, c. 8). They attributed some things, but not all, to fate (Idem. Antiq. xiii. 5). Their chief distinguishing characteristics were pride and hypocrisy; hence, the unsparing denunciations of them by our Blessed Lord everywhere in the Gospel; because, from pride and malice, they always opposed Divine truth. Owing to their external show of mere religious observance, they possessed the greatest influence among the people in general.

The Sadducees derived their name from tsedec (*justice*), because they made a profession of strict justice, in consequence of their excessive rigour in enforcing the punishments enacted by the law against transgressors, whenever they got hold of authority; or from Sadoc, their founder. These were a kind of freethinkers among the Jews—earnal unbelievers; Epicureans, in religion. They denied the resurrection, and the existence of angels or spirits (Acts xxiii. 8). Denying fate altogether, they asserted that man's happiness or misery altogether depended on himself (Josephus Antiq. xiii. 5). Against them were written the books of Wisdom and 2nd of Machabees. They rejected all unwritten traditions, and impiously perverted the meaning of SS. Scripture. Some say they admitted only the Pentateuch. While the mass of the people adhered to the Pharisees, the wealthy and higher classes attached themselves to the Sadducees, who allowed greater indulgence to the gratification of their corrupt passions. A bad example was given to this class by John Hircanus, the son of Simon Machabæus, who, in his old age, deserting the Pharisees, passed over to the Sadducees (Josephus Antiq., Lib. xiii. c. 8). Herod himself adopted the tenets of the Sadducees, and was a decided enemy of the Pharisees. Although maintaining doctrines seemingly heretical, and opposed to the law of Moses, still the Sadducees were not, like the Samaritans, excluded from the Synagogue. We find them, in passages of the New Testament, mixed up with the Priests and Pharisees, both in matters sacred and profane (Acts iv. 1; xxiii. 6). Their religious feuds with the Pharisees ceased a good deal under the Roman Governors, who proved equally favourable to both sects; and, however much they differed among themselves in principle, still they united in opposing and persecuting our Divine Redeemer—which is quite usual at all times with contending sects, wherever the Church of God is concerned—a thing to be noticed, even at the present day. We shall treat of the Essenes and Herodians elsewhere. The doctrines and morals of all these sects are described by Josephus (Lib. ii., Bel. Jud., c. vii.; Lib. xiii. Antiq. c. 9; Lib. xviii., c. 2). (See c. xxii. 23.)

"Seeing many of them coming to (receive) his baptism"—"to be baptized by him" (Luke iii. 7)—"he said to them." St. Luke (iii. 7) says it was "to the multitudes that came forth to be baptized" he spoke. However, both narratives are easily reconciled, by saying that he addressed the Scribes and Pharisees whom he saw among the multitude, easily distinguishable by their dress and general appearance, so that when addressing the multitude, his words were meant for them; or, the words of St. Luke might be understood to mean that he spoke, in presence of the multitudes, words intended for the Pharisees and Sadducees.

"Ye brood of vipers." These words are, probably, allusive to the old serpent who tempted Eve. *Vipers* were the most venomous description of serpents (Acts xxviii. 3). Here, our Lord taxes the malignity of the Pharisees, &c., which consisted in calumniating and persecuting good and holy men. These haughty men prided in their descent

from Abraham and the Patriarchs; and hence the Baptist, reminds them that, far from glorying in their descent, they should rather be humbled at considering that they were the descendants of vicious parents, persecutors of the prophets and of the just, whose vices they inherited and faithfully copied in their lives, rather than descendants of Abraham, whose virtues they practically ignored. They were the wicked offspring of wicked parents, whose malice principally consisted in persecuting holy men. This he says with a view of humbling them, and preparing them for penance, supposing that he regarded them as sincere; or, if we suppose that, divinely gifted with an insight into their hypocritical feelings, he regarded them as insincere, he addressed them thus, for the purpose of reproaching them with their vices, and deterring others from being seduced by their evil example, as our Redeemer did. (Matt. xxiii.)

"Who hath showed you to fly?" &c. These words are understood by some (A. Lapidé, &c.) to mean: How is it possible that you could be persuaded by any one that you could escape the future damnation and pains of hell, in which you believe not (this would strike at the Sadducees) or have no apprehension of, from a false persuasion regarding your own justice (this would apply to the Pharisees)? This could only proceed from your own incredulity and vain presumption. Others regard the words of the Baptist as expressive of great admiration, as if he said: Since you are the wicked offspring of wicked parents, malicious persecutors and calumniators of just men, what could possibly influence you, who, either from incredulity, believe not in future torments, or, from vain presumption and a false sense of security, proceeding from a foolish feeling regarding your personal sanctity, fear them not, mixing yourselves up with the crowd of sinners, soldiers, and publicans, to come here, confess your sins, and receive my baptism? Surely, this cannot come from yourselves, but from the wonderful goodness and grace of God. This latter interpretation accords well with the following verse.

"The wrath to come," is understood by some of the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; but it more probably refers to the future torments of hell, as in Matthew (xxiii. 33). The Baptist, who first proposes the future rewards of the kingdom of glory, also presents to our view the tortures of hell. Heretofore, the Jews were stimulated to the observances of the law, by temporal rewards and threats of temporal punishment. The Baptist proposes a new sanction altogether—the joys of heaven and the tortures of hell. Some read the word *"showed"* in the future—*"who will show?"* as if he said, Who can possibly teach you, who are in the habit of teaching others; who can instruct you and apply to you the proper remedies, who hypocritically conceal your inmost dispositions?

8. Then, if through the grace of God you feel interiorly these sentiments of true sorrow, which you externally profess by coming here, prove the sincerity of your interior dispositions by performing the good works worthy of penance—the good works which penance inspires and dictates, and requires for its complement—mere internal feelings will not do. They must be shown externally in your conduct. These fruits of penance are satisfactory good works, opposed to the vices they indulged in. The greater the crimes and indulgence, the greater should be the satisfaction and reparation. The unchaste man should specially cultivate the virtue of chastity; the drunkard, temperance; the proud, humility; the thief and robber, after making restitution, should cultivate, in future, the virtue of justice, &c. *"As they hitherto yielded their members to serve uncleanness unto iniquity; so, now, they would yield them to serve justice, unto sanctification"* (Rom. vi. 19).

9. "*And think not to say within yourselves.*" Do not entertain and feel complacency or false security in the proud thought and false presumption: we are children of Abraham (John viii. 33, &c.) to whom was promised a numerous progeny. Hence, whatever we do, we must be heirs to His promises, as God's promise to Abraham cannot be made void. This the Baptist proposes as an objection, conceived within their minds, against the threats of eternal perdition, which he is after denouncing against them. To this he replies, as does St. Paul (Rom. ix. 6, 7), that their rejection and final perdition would not in the least make void the promises made to Abraham. For the fulfilment and verification of His promises God could raise up from the very stones, children who would be heirs of His promises, even if the Jews were rejected, just as He raised the first man out of the slime of the earth, and vivified the dead and barren womb of Sara to give birth to Isaac, the father of the children of promise. "*But in Isaac shall thy seed be called*" (Rom. ix. 7). It is not to flesh and blood, or to carnal descent from Abraham, the promise is attached, as is clear from the rejection of Ismael, the first born; but to faith and obedience. From the sincerity of faith, and not proximity of blood, the children of Abraham and the heirs of his promises are to be reckoned. For, the birth of Isaac was owing, more to the power and promise of God, than to carnal generation. Hence, were God, as a last extremity, to convert the very stones into men, whom He would inspire with the faith and obedience of Abraham, heirs to his promises would not be wanting. But, He had other means at hand, viz., the call of the Gentiles, whose stony hearts He softened with the influences of His divine and heavenly grace, who became sons, that is, imitators of the faith and obedience of Abraham. It may be, that, in speaking of "*stones*," he referred to the Gentiles, whose hearts, obdurate in vice, were as hard as the statues of stones they were in the habit of adoring, "*similes illis fiant qui faciunt ea*" (Psa. cxiii. 8), or, he may have in view, the "*stones*" strewn on the banks of the Jordan ("*these stones*") which symbolized the hard hearts of the Gentiles. These, if converted into men by God's power, would be spiritual sons of Abraham, by grace and faith.

TEXT.

10. *For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.*

11. *I indeed baptize you in water unto penance, but he that shall come after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire.*

12. *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his floor: and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.*

COMMENTARY.

10. This verse may be immediately connected with v. 8 in continuation of the metaphor of the tree and the fruit (the intervening v. 9 being regarded as an incidental reply to a tacit objection existing in their minds), as if he said: It behoves you to bring forth good fruit (v. 8.) For (v. 10) God is about to execute speedy ("*now*") and irreparable ruin ("*the root*") on all such as shall fail to do so without distinction of Jew or Gentile.

"*Every tree*," that is, every man, whoever he be, whether carnally descended from Abraham or not, who shall fail to "*yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire*," i.e., of hell, which is "*unquenchable*" (v. 12). The words are allusive to the destination of worthless trees, left to be cut down and to wither. Their destination or end is the fire. Or, it may be immediately connected with the

preceding (v. 9), and would then contain a second reason for removing the grounds of their false confidence, arising from having Abraham, as their father. The first reason is given in v. 9, "*God is able*," &c. The second, here; as if he said, their confidence is ill-founded: for destruction awaits all without distinction, be their descent what it may, who shall fail to produce good fruit and perform good works. Some expositors understand this, of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem. It is better, however, to understand it, of the punishment awaiting every unrepenting sinner in the life to come. "*Every tree . . . cast into the fire*." But, against this interpretation it may be objected; was it not always true that the judgment of God had, at all times, condemned to hell sinners who died in their sins? How then, say, that "*now the axe is laid*?" &c. If reference be made to future judgment, was it not very distant from the men whom the Baptist addresses? Yes, judgment of eternal damnation is at all times, from the beginning to the end of the world, inflicted on impenitent sinners, including as well those who in past ages, sinned in darkness and ignorance, as those who sin in the full blaze of Gospel light and knowledge. Hence, in Greek, we have the present tense, *εκκοπτεται, βαλλεται*, "*is cut down, is cast*," &c., embracing all time. But, in former ages, God seemed to dissemble His wrath and His punishment, which, although very heavy, would still be less severe on those who sinned in ignorance, than on those who sinned in the full blaze of Gospel light; and it is only now they are proclaimed far and wide, and openly made known through the Gospel, as near at hand. Hence, it is said, "*now the axe*," &c.; because, in Scripture language, a thing is said to happen, when it is made known.

Others, not satisfied with the above interpretation, understand the words of the judgment of God in calling to, and rejecting from, His Church, "*the Kingdom of Heaven now at hand*," which His Son is soon to establish on earth. In this interpretation, the Baptist would assign another reason why they should not rely too much on their carnal descent from Abraham; because, "*now*"—very soon—God will exercise His spiritual judgment on all mankind, whether born of Abraham or not, in rejecting them, or calling them, to His Church, as heirs of the promises of Abraham, according as they correspond with His gracious imitations to do penance, and reform their lives by performing the good works which His grace will inspire and aid them to perform; or, according as they reject the same, and merit, by their exclusion from the Church, to be finally reserved for everlasting fire.

11. "*I indeed baptize you*," &c. These words need not necessarily be connected with those of the preceding verse, as if spoken at the same time, or immediately after them, by the Baptist. From St. Luke (iii. 15) it would seem that they were spoken by him to refute a false notion, which he knew existed in the minds of the people regarding himself, as if he were their long expected Messiah. It may be, he knew their feelings from the faculty divinely granted him of penetrating the secret thoughts of their hearts; or, he may have learned their opinions from the discourses of the people, or from some of his own disciples who associated and moved among the people; or, it may be, if we consider these words spoken on the occasion recorded (John i. 19), that he learned it from those who were deputed to make inquiries of himself personally on this debated subject. Some commentators, however, think the occasion referred to (John i. 19-27) different from this, inasmuch as the occurrence, referred to in John, took place *after* Christ's baptism by John, and the occurrence here recorded, *before* it. Moreover, he says (John i. 26), he speaks of our Redeemer as "*standing in the midst of them*," of whom he before said, that, "*He was to come after him*;" here, and, St. Luke iii., he insinuates the contrary. If the three other Evangelists refer

to the same occasion, referred to by St. John (i. 19-27), it must be said, that they narrated by anticipation, as if occurring *before* Christ's baptism by John, what only occurred *after* it. The people seeing the extraordinary sanctity of John, and the repute in which he was held, looked upon him as the Messiah, who was expected about this time by the Jews; because, the term marked out for His coming, in their ancient prophecies, had now expired. The rite of baptism which John administered, confirmed them in this impression, as the giving of baptism was considered a peculiar mark that was to distinguish the Messiah (John i. 25; Ezechiel xxxvii., "*effundam super vos aquam mundam*," &c.) This was divinely disposed, in order to show forth the humility of the Baptist, and add greater weight to his testimony regarding our Lord, while raising Him infinitely above himself, whom the people held in such high veneration for his extraordinary sanctity and austerity of life. The Baptist, in bearing testimony to our Lord, compares, 1st, his person; and, 2ndly, his baptism, with the Divine Person and the baptism of our Lord, and exalts the latter, in an infinite degree, as was meet, beyond the former.

First, as to His Person, he says, that our Lord, "*who is to come after him*," his junior in point of birth in the flesh, and in regard to the time of his public preaching and manifestation to the world, to come after him, was "*mightier*" than he, as possessing within Himself infinite efficacy and power, which He displayed in all His actions, reaching not only the bodies, but the souls of men. The words, "*mightier than I*," are probably allusive to the description of the qualities of our Lord as given by Isaiah (ix. 7), who calls Him "*the Mighty God*." His supereminent dignity is such that John is unworthy to be His servant, or to perform the most menial office for Him. One of the most menial offices assigned to servants or slaves of the lowest description among the ancients, Romans, Greeks, Jews, &c., was to carry, to bind and loose their master's shoes. According to the other Evangelists it said, he is not worthy to stoop down and untie "*the latchet of His shoes*." The meaning is the same as that conveyed by St. Matthew here, viz., that he is unworthy to perform the most menial office in His regard. Or, it may be that the Baptist used both forms of expression, viz., that he was unworthy to carry His shoes, or even to stoop down and untie them.

Secondly, as to his baptism, exalting Christ's baptism above his own, he says his baptism merely reached the bodies of men. Its effect was merely to wash or baptize them with water, "*unto penance*," as a sign of the spiritual cleansing which they needed, as a protestation of their need of penance for their past sins, but, *of itself*, it did not reach the soul, so as to impart grace or remit sin; whereas, the baptism of Christ, who was infinitely "*mightier*" and more powerful to impart efficacy to any rite He would institute, was not confined in its effects to the body; it reached the entire nature of mankind, it poured into their souls "*the Holy Ghost*," who with the active properties of "*fire*," cleansed and purified their whole interior, and lit up in them the burning flames of Divine love.

"*He shall baptize*," &c. If the word, "*baptize*," be taken in its plain, literal signification, then, it includes the rite of baptism, instituted by our Lord in water, as is indicated (John iii. 5; Matt. xxi. 25), and the passage means: He shall institute a baptism, the effects of which shall not merely reach the body, and typify interior cleansing (like the baptism of John); but it shall confer the Holy Ghost, who will produce effects of cleansing, purifying, enlightening and warming, symbolized by the natural effects and active agency of "*fire*." "*And fire*." The word "*and*" signifies, *that is, fire*.

If the word, "*baptize*," be taken figuratively to signify the effects of baptism in both cases; then, the words mean: the effect of my baptism is merely to wash the

body externally, as a sign of the desired cleansing of the soul. But the effect of His baptism shall be, to pour the manifold gifts and energy of the Holy Ghost into the souls of men. It seems quite clear, that it is in this latter sense the words are to be understood; since, it is not the matter of his own baptism and that of Christ which John is here contrasting, but the effect of both, the latter being far more exalted, and as far superior to the former, as the cleansing of the soul is above that of the body: and the cleansing power and efficacy of fire is above that of water. This latter sense is allusive to the signification given the word by our Redeemer Himself (Acts i. 5), where He speaks of the baptism of the Spirit; or, of receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and the word, "baptism," is taken figuratively elsewhere, to denote the gifts of sanctifying grace received through suffering, "habeo Baptismum . . . et quomodo coarctor," &c. Hence, theologians distinguish the threefold baptism of water, blood, and the Spirit, the effect being substantially the same in all. The figurative understanding of the word, "baptize," here does not, by any means, warrant the Methodists and Quakers in regarding baptism as a spiritual effect, and not as an external material rite; because, elsewhere (Matt. xxvii.; John iii.), the words must be taken literally, to mean an external rite. For, according to a received canon for interpreting SS. Scripture, the words should be understood literally, unless there be some reason or necessity for taking them figuratively. Now, in the passage referred to, there is nothing either in the context, or the laws of Hermeneutics, to warrant us in departing from the plain and obvious meaning of the words; whereas, in this present verse (11), we are forced by the very nature of the language employed, to understand the words figuratively; since, no one can, in the literal sense, be "baptized in the Holy Ghost and in fire." The figurative use of a word in some passages of SS. Scripture would by no means force us to use it figuratively in every other passage, particularly when the context would imply the contrary. Now, the baptism of John was clearly an external rite performed with water; so was that also given by St. Peter to Cornelius, the Centurion. "Can any one forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" (Acts x. 44-48.) With water also did Philip baptize the Eunuch (Acts viii. 38). The words, then, refer to the abundant effusion of the gifts of the Holy Ghost by our Lord on His faithful followers, through the rite of baptism, instituted by Him in water.

"Fire" is variously interpreted. But it is, most likely, meant to convey an idea of, and symbolize, the active properties and working of the Holy Ghost in the soul. The leading properties of fire are: to consume, enlighten, in flame, transform all into itself. So it is with the Holy Ghost. Once He takes possession of the souls of men, like "fire," He cleanses from their sins the truly penitent, who believe in Him. He enlightens, inflames, and transforms them into Himself.

12. "Whose fan is in His hand." In these words, the Baptist, after describing the great mercy and goodness of our Lord, in the plentiful redemption He bestows on the just and repentant, refers to Him, in His judicial character, and points out the rigorous judgment He shall execute on the unrepenting sinners, and on those who shall fall away from justice. This He does with the view of terrifying the unrepenting Jews, and also of removing any false feelings of undue confidence they might conceive, as if having once received the Holy Ghost, they need not be over cautious in regard to the future. The words convey a figurative allusion to the mode, employed by the Jews, of separating the chaff and other filth from the good grain, by means of a "fan" or winnowing shovel. By the "fan" is meant the judgment which our Lord, "to whom His Father has given all judgment" (John v. 22), shall exercise at the last day, on all mankind. This judgment, although distant, is still virtually present and quite

near. ("His fan is in His hand," ready for execution.) This is intelligible, if we consider that the longest period of time, in the measure of God, and compared with eternity, is but a mere point: and, moreover, this judgment virtually takes place at death, which is quite near to each one.

"*Thoroughly cleanse His floor,*" that is, the grain on His floor. This may refer to His Church, in which are to be found good and bad; or, to the entire universe, which is "His."

"*The wheat.*" The good, who persevere in the performance of good works.

"*The barn.*" Heaven.

"*The chaff.*" The wicked, the worthless, who have not done good, and have been workers of iniquity.

"*Unquenchable fire,*" that is, hell fire, which shall never be extinguished, as it needs no fuel, save the undying breath of an angry God. It means also, that the fire never destroys, or utterly consumes, but burns and tortures for ever, such as fall into it. The Greek (αἰσθητός) means, *unextinguished, unquenched, eternal, ever-enduring*. The words contain an allusion to the passage of Isaias (lxvi. 24), "*Vermis eorum non morietur,*" &c. "*Quis de coelis habitabit cum igne decorante. . . ardoribus sempiternis?*" These words refute the heresy of Origen regarding the finite duration of the pains of hell, or their cessation after a certain period. Modern Origenes on this subject are cropping up of late in this country.

TEXT.

13. *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan, unto John, to be baptized by him.*

14. *But John stayed him, saying: I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?*

15. *And Jesus, answering, said to him: Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice. Then he suffered him.*

COMMENTARY.

13. "*Then.*" Whilst John was engaged in his ministry of baptizing and preaching the near approach of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the near advent of Him, of whose infinite dignity and superiority above himself, as being the promised Redeemer of the world, he was treating with the crowds who flocked to hear him, "*then,*" very opportunely, our Lord came "*from Galilee*" i.e., Nazareth, the city of Galilee, where He lived a private life, exercising his father's (Joseph) trade and obeying his parents. He came "*to the Jordan, unto John,*" i.e., to the part of the Jordan where John was baptizing—for the Jordan flows through Galilee—" *to be baptized by him;*" that thus, after receiving public testimony from John, and from Heaven at the same time, he would be at once ready to enter on His mission in Judea, where, by the Divine disposition of His Heavenly Father, the Gospel was to be first preached. Several reasons are assigned by the holy Fathers why our Lord, who never sinned, and consequently needed not be baptized "*unto penance*" for sin, came privately to receive this baptism from John, mixing Himself up with Pharisees, Publicans, soldiers and harlots. The principal of which are—1. As He made circumcision a sign of the Jewish people of old, so He wished to make baptism a sign of His chosen people in the New Law; and He wished that John's baptism would denote this. 2. In order to cure the patients, He wished to become like them. 3. He wished to show, in the descent of the Holy Ghost, that the waters were sanctified by His touch, and that the Holy Ghost came down in His own baptism, typified by that of John. 4. He wished to give authority and weight to John's testimony regarding Himself. Our Lord Himself assigns one

reason, viz., that by doing so He should "*fulfil all justice*" (v. 15), that is, fulfil all the precepts of God, this among the rest. Hence, St. Chrysostom (Hom. de Baptismo Christi) says, "Justice is the fulfilment of all God's commandments. But some one will ask, what justice is this, to be baptized? It was justice to obey the Prophet, as, therefore, He was circumcised, offered sacrifice, observed the Jewish festivals; so He observed this remaining one, to obey the baptizing Prophet, whom God sent to baptize the people." Our Lord's coming to John's baptism afforded an occasion of testimony being publicly borne to Him from heaven, and John's baptism in the Jordan, which attracted vast crowds, afforded him an opportunity of humbling himself before the Son of God, and of proclaiming His infinite superiority over himself. St. Chrysostom (*loco citato*) says, "For no other cause was that laver (John's baptism) instituted except to prepare the way for all to embrace the faith of Christ. Hence, he says: *I came to baptize, therefore, that He might be manifested in Israel* (John i. 31). But, I ask, might he not preach and attract the people without baptism? Not so easily. If there were preaching without baptism, all would not have readily come together; nor, could they have so readily learned, by comparison, the pre-eminence of Christ; because, the multitude went out not to hear what He said. Why, then? That, confessing their sins, they might be baptized. But coming, they were taught what related to Christ."

14. "*But John stayed Him, saying.*" It is clear from these words, that the Baptist knew Him to be the Son of God *before* His baptism. This he knew from an inspiration or revelation divinely accorded to him. This is not opposed to what the Baptist says (John i. 33), "*I knew Him not . . . but upon whom thou shalt see the Holy Ghost descending. . . . He it is that baptizeth in the Holy Ghost.*" These latter words only contain a corroborative testimony, confirming the faith John had before received from revelation, regarding our Lord's Divinity *before* he baptized Him. The Greek word for "*I knew Him not*" (οὐκ ᾔδειν), might be rendered, "*I saw Him not.*" But the moment he saw our Lord coming to baptism, then, at once, he knew Him by divine instinct to be Him whom he knew to be born, whom he saluted from his mother's womb, whom he proclaimed to be greater and stronger than himself, whose baptism would be in the Holy Ghost, and in fire. The subsequent voice which he heard from the cloud (v. 17), gave him no new knowledge. It only confirmed his faith in the Divinity of Christ. But the Baptist adduces (John i. 33), this last public communication as a testimony to our Lord's Divinity, as the Jews would have attached, probably, but comparatively little weight to any private revelation made to himself on this head, and to show he was not influenced by any private considerations in bearing testimony to Christ.

"*Stayed Him.*" This arose from a feeling of self-unworthiness, compared with Him towards whom he was unworthy to discharge the most menial service. He also remembered the efficacy of that baptism which was to be "*in the Holy Ghost and fire.*" The Greek (δικολλῶν) means, urgently sought to prohibit him, "*saying, I ought to be baptized by thee.*" For, "*I ought,*" the Greek (χρεῖαν ἔχω) means, "*I need*" your baptism. He speaks of the spiritual effects of Christ's baptism, in pouring the Holy Ghost into his soul. He needed to be cleansed by Christ, from several venial and light faults, and to be perfected by the Holy Ghost. But the words do not imply a precept to have recourse to Christ's baptism in water, which was not yet instituted. It is commonly believed, that John was sanctified in his mother's womb, and cleansed from original sin, on the occasion of the Blessed Virgin visiting St. Elizabeth, when John leaped with joy in her womb. But this was owing to the future merits of Christ. Hence,

Is Jesus Baptized?
or baptised?

the words of John are verified in this sense. It is a matter of doubt and uncertainty, whether our Lord ever conferred baptism on John.

"*And comest Thou to me?*" Those words are emphatic. Cometh the gold to the clay? the sun to the lamp? the heir to the servant? the Lord to his precursor? the Lamb without spot to the sinner? &c.

15. "*Suffer it now.*" Our Lord, approving of John's reason for declining to baptize Him, tells him to suffer Him at present (concealing, *only for a time* ("not" His Divinity, which would be revealed in due time *hereafter*), to receive baptism at his hands; saying, that far from it being indecent or unbecoming in John, as the Baptist humbly insinuated, to bestow baptism on Christ, it was, on the contrary, meet and becoming. "*It becometh us to fulfil all justice.*" By "*all justice*," may be understood everything, be it ever so minute, or apparently trivial, agreeable to God and conducive to man's sanctification, whether it be preceptive, or merely of counsel and perfection. "*It becomes us*," including John. He and our Blessed Redeemer were sent by God, and it behoves those appointed to teach others, to give the example of strict observance and perfection to others (see v. 13, St. Chrysostom). It may be, that our Lord speaks of Himself only in the plural number. Our Lord would here seem to insinuate that it was the will of God, that He would be baptized by John; and hence, both our Redeemer, who received it, and John, who was sent by God to baptize (John i. 33), by obeying the will of God, fulfilled what was agreeable to Him.

In these words, our Lord assigns the general reason why He desired to receive John's baptism. But this general reason does not exclude the other particular reasons assigned for the same by the holy Fathers, viz., our Lord's desire to show His approbation of John's baptism—to meet an objection the Pharisees might afterwards allege, that He Himself did not receive John's baptism—to give an example of humility, &c. (see v. 13).

"*Then he suffered Him*," no longer declining to baptize Him. He suffered Him to enter the river, and be merged in the water, out of which our Lord "*forthwith came out*," after receiving baptism by immersion.

TEXT.

16. *And Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to him: and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him.*

17. *And behold a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

COMMENTARY.

16. "*Forthwith*," is connected by some commentators with "*came out*." And these say, the Evangelist uses the word on purpose to convey, that while others, who were baptized, remained in the water until they confessed their sins, our Lord, having no sins to confess, went up at once, after His baptism, out of the water. However, it is more probably to be joined with the following—"forthwith the heavens were opened." This is the construction warranted by St. Mark (i. 10). St. Luke says (iii. 21), that while He was "*praying, heaven was opened*." Prayer was, most likely, the attitude in which our Lord placed Himself, immediately on coming out of the water after baptism.

"*And behold the heavens were opened to Him: and He saw the Spirit of God*," &c. It is disputed whether "*he saw*" refers to our Lord or to the Baptist. The natural construction would make it refer most likely to our Lord. On the other hand, the

Greek for "upon him" is ἐπ' αὐτόν, upon him—not the reciprocal εἰς αὐτόν, himself. This would refer it to John, unless we say the personal "him" is used for the reciprocal himself—an attic construction adopted by the Vulgate, "*super se*." One thing is certain, whether this refer to the Baptist or not, that he saw the Holy Ghost descending on our Lord (John i. 34). It is disputed whether the multitude saw the heavens opened, and heard the voice. St. Luke, as if insinuating this, pointedly remarks that, "*the heavens were opened*," &c., "*when all the people were baptized*" (Luke iii. 21). The affirmative is held by some; because, it was to give them a proof of His Divinity, this occurred. These understand the words, "*aperiti, sunt ei celi*," to mean "*opened for Him*," or on His account. Others maintain the negative; because, the Baptist says (John i. 32), "*I saw the Spirit descending*." If all the multitude saw, he would have said, "*We saw*," &c., and in that case, what need was there of John's testimony to announce this to the people, when they themselves saw it as well as the Baptist? Moreover, would not John's disciples, who closely adhered to their master, have seen it? and it is clearly insinuated (John iii. 28), that they did not. Besides, our Lord would not, at this time, wish to reveal the mystery of the Trinity to the people; and when a similar revelation was made at His transfiguration (xvii. 9), He charged the disciples to tell it to no one till after His resurrection. This manifestation was made to John, that he might afterwards make use of it as a testimony; and the Heavenly Father sent the Spirit in the form of a dove, not to give it to our Lord, who, from His incarnation was filled with the Holy Ghost, without measure; but, to manifest that He was, as had been promised (Isa. lxi. 1-3), anointed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, when He went on His public mission of "*preaching to the poor, and healing the contrite of heart*," &c.

"*The heavens were opened*," that is to say, a fissure or rent was made in the upper regions of the air, out of which, bordered with light, the dove, symbolizing the Holy Ghost, came forth, and the voice issued.

"*And he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove*," &c. St. Luke says (iii. 21), "*in a bodily shape*." Most likely, this was not a real dove, but a solid body, like a dove, formed of material elements, moved by an angel or some other Divine agency, and having performed its function, resolving itself again into the original elements that composed it. It visibly exhibited to the eyes of our Lord and of the Baptist, the presence of the Holy Ghost, who is by nature invisible. The four Evangelists say, "*As a dove*," implying likeness or similitude. This dove-like form descended to point out that our Lord, in whom already, from His incarnation, "*dwelt the plenitude of the Divinity*," and to whom "*God did not give the Spirit by measure*," was filled with gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which the dove was a befitting emblem. In this interpretation, there is no room for error or misconception, regarding the locomotion or change of place, by the Holy Ghost. As the dove was employed of old, to point out that the ancient world was saved from the universal shipwreck; so now a dove is employed by the Holy Ghost, to point Him out, who is to rescue mankind from eternal death and sin. This dove was not, like the humanity of our Lord, hypostatically united to the person of the Holy Ghost; but only a visible symbol of His presence, with the fulness of His gifts, in our Redeemer. It is to be observed, that what happened Him symbolizes, what happens us at baptism. When we receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, heaven opens to us; and we become sons of God by the grace of adoption received from the Eternal Father.

17. "*And behold*," another event no less stupendous than the descent from heaven of the dove; "*a voice from heaven*," a distinct, articulate voice, representing

God, the Father. The voice affecting the sense of hearing came from the same place, whence issued the "*dove*," which affected the sense of seeing. The voice without the dove, would not certainly point out Christ, as distinctly referred to, any more than any one else. Nor would the dove without the voice clearly intimate anything. The voice showed what it was the dove symbolized.

"*This is my beloved Son.*" Both Mark and Luke concur in the reading, "*Thou art my beloved Son,*" which is, therefore, considered the more probable reading. And, as it was to our Lord the heavens were opened, most likely, it was to Him also the voice was addressed. However, St. Matthew gives the sense.

"*My beloved Son.*" The article prefixed to "beloved," *ὁ ἀγαπητός* (*the beloved*), and to "Son" also, *ὁ υἱός* (*the Son*), point to Him, as the *natural*, the *only* and *eternally begotten* and *singularly beloved Son of God*, partaking of the same Divine nature, consubstantial and co-eternal with Him.

"*In whom I am well pleased.*" That is, in whom I feel an infinite complacency, in whom I am reconciled to a sinful world, in whom I am pleased with every one else; nor am I pleased in anyone else, save through Him.

In looking on the face of His beloved Son, it no longer repenteth God that He made man (Gen. vi. 6). He is now pleased with sinful man, through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. The dove is once more employed, as the messenger of peace and reconciliation of God with man, after the storm of His wrath is appeased. The words of this verse contain an allusion to the words of Isaias (xlii.), "*Ecce servus meus . . . complacuit sibi in illo anima mea*" (see c. xvii. 4, 5).

Here, as is remarked by St. Jerome (*in hunc locum*) we have revealed to the Baptist, the mystery of the Adorable Trinity, with a distinctness, not vouchsafed to any of the ancient Patriarchs or Prophets. The Father, speaking in a distinct voice, of *His Son*. The Son, receiving testimony in His mortal visible flesh. The Holy Ghost, "the Spirit of God," in the visible form of a dove. LAUS DEO SEMPER.

CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist describes the temptation of our Lord by the devil, which He underwent for our instruction. He describes our Lord's preparation in prayer and solitude for the combat (1-2). The triple temptation to gluttony, vain glory, and ambition, and our Lord's signal triumph, in regard to each, over the fiend (3-10). The victory of our Lord over His prostrate foe, shown by the departure of the devil for a time, and by the ministrations of the Angels (11). Our Lord's retirement for a time into Galilee, on hearing of the Baptist's imprisonment, and His abode at Capernaum; thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaias, regarding the great light to be seen first by the people inhabiting the surrounding districts (12-16). The preaching of our Lord, commencing, like that of the Baptist, with the necessity of penance (17). The call to the Apostleship of the brothers, Peter and Andrew, and also of the brothers, John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and their prompt obedience and correspondence with the heavenly vocation (18-22). Our Lord's preaching throughout Galilee, which He confirmed by miraculous cures, the fame of which was spread abroad throughout the vast district of Syria, and attracted great multitudes from Galilee and the surrounding districts (23-25).

TEXT.

THEN Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil.

2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.

3. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4. *Who answered and said : It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.*

5. *Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple,*

6. *And said to Him : If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written : That he shall give his Angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

7. *Jesus said to him : It is written, again : Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

8. *Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain : and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,*

9. *And said to him : All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me.*

10. *Then Jesus said to him : Begone, Satan : for it is written : The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.*

11. *Then the devil left him ; and behold Angels came and ministered to him.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Then,*" immediately after His baptism and the descent of the dove (c. iii. 17). St. Mark says (i. 12), "*And immediately the Spirit drove Him,*" &c.

"*Jesus was led.*" The Greek, ἀναχθῆναι means, *led apart*. St. Mark has (i. 12), "*the Spirit drove Him out.*" The words "*drive,*" &c., denote the active energy of the Holy Ghost, and the alacrity with which our Redeemer freely yielded to His impulses, by whom He was guided from His infancy, and who now more and more manifests Himself in Him, making Him appear a new man.

"*By the Spirit,*" the holy Fathers (among them, Jerome, Chrysostom, Hilary, Gregory, &c.), commonly understood the Holy Ghost, the Spirit immediately spoken of, in the foregoing (iii. 16). This is the invariable meaning of "*Spirit*" in SS. Scriptures, when used absolutely and emphatically with the article. Here, we have τοῦ πνεύματος. St. Luke says of Him, "*plenus Spiritu sancto*" (iv. 1). If "*Spirit*" referred to the devil, then, in the following words, the Evangelist should have written, not as he has done, "*to be tempted by the devil,*" which would be a mere repetition, but, "*to be tempted BY HIM.*"

"*Into the desert.*" The interior of the desert that lay close by, where John was baptizing. It was afterwards called "*Quarantania,*" from our Saviour's fast of *forty days* there. It is said by writers on the Holy Land to be situated convenient to where the Jordan disembogues itself into the Dead Sea, a mountainous range north of the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. St. Mark gives an idea of its desolateness (i. 13), "*He was with the beasts,*" having no human habitation.

"*To be tempted by the devil.*" This is the chief reason of our Lord being impelled by the Holy Ghost to go into the desert, that as a consequence of it, the devil finding Him there would tempt Him, and entering into single combat, would receive a signal overthrow from our Lord, which, like all His public acts, was intended for our instruction, when placed in circumstances of temptation. There are several other reasons and motives besides, assignable for His having gone into the desert, encountering the devil, in solitude, while engaged in fasting and praying, intended for the instruction and guidance of the Church in general, and of each individual in particular, and also for the period of forty days' fast which He had undergone before He was tempted. He, the Captain of our warfare, wished to show us the effectual means of overcoming our enemy. viz., fasting, solitude, prayer. He also wished to

inspire us with courage for the combat, since He, our Head, had, unlike Eve, by these means manfully resisted the tempter's suggestions and signally discomfited him.

"*That He might be tempted,*" &c. "*That*" signifies the *consequence*, or *result*, not the *direct end*. For there is question here not of temptation of *trial* merely, whereby the devil would find out if our Lord were the Son of God (although he had this also in view), but also of temptation of *deceit*, whereby the devil sought to induce Him to commit sin. It might be admitted, that our Lord meant to be tempted by the devil, whom He came to overthrow, knowing His own power and invincibility. This, however, would not warrant us, who are so weak and liable to sin, to expose ourselves unnecessarily to temptation. For, "*he who loves the danger, shall perish in it.*" Our Lord might have been privately tempted by the devil during His education at Nazareth. But whether tempted publicly (as here), or privately, all temptations must be *external*, from without, either from the devil or men, that is, the world. But, He could, by no means, be tempted inwardly, from His own flesh, any more than Adam could while in a state of innocence before he lost sanctifying grace. "*All this diabolical temptation was from without; not, from within*" (St. Greg. Hom. 16).

"*The devil*" (διαβολος), strictly means, a *slanderer*—the great enemy of the human race—"the accuser of his brethren" (Apoc. xii. 10), whom he wishes to make hateful to God, by impelling them to sin. Probably, allusion is made to Lucifer; "*the devil and his angels*" (Matt. xxv. 41; Apoc. xii. 9).

2. "*And when He had fasted forty days,*" &c. In imitation of Moses before giving the Old Law, and of Elias before repairing or reforming it, our Redeemer wishes before explaining the New Law, to retire for forty days, and after fasting and prayer, to come forth to preach. The number, forty, in SS. Scripture, from the earliest history of the world, marks several events of the utmost importance to man, from the forty days of the deluge to the forty days' fast of our Divine Redeemer. To His fast of "forty days" is also added, "*and forty nights,*" to distinguish it, from the Jewish fasts which were confined to the day only. At night, they could use food. His fast did not exceed forty *natural* days, including days and nights, lest He might not be regarded as human; since no other human being, not even Moses or Elias, exceeded that term in fasting. In this forty days' fast, our Lord left us an example of how we ought to prepare to overcome the devil, who, in some instances, is overcome only by "*prayer and fasting*" (Mark ix. 28). He also wished to leave the Church an example of that fast, which she was to institute, of forty days of Lent, as we are told by the holy Fathers. (St. Jerome Ep. ad Marcellum; St. Augustine ad Januarium; St. Ambrose Serm. 39, de Quadrages., &c.) It cannot be doubted that this fast of Lent was always regarded to be of Apostolical origin. Our Lord, no doubt, devoted those forty days to prayer and constant communing with His Heavenly Father.

"*He was afterwards hungry.*" Although the soul of Jesus enjoyed, without intermission, the beatific vision, and was supremely happy; still, He allowed the inferior faculties to suffer. As He voluntarily submitted to the other feelings and sensations of human nature, so He now allowed Himself to feel the pangs of hunger, to prove His humanity, and give the devil an opportunity of tempting Him, as he formerly tempted Eve. During these forty days His Divinity sustained His humanity against the consequences of this long fast. Possibly, our Lord may have Himself communicated to the devil, His state of suffering from the pangs of hunger, by some external act, such as seeking for food, or in some other way. St. Chrysostom says, it was the Son of God Himself that made known His hunger to the devil, to entice Him to the combat, and thus receive a signal overthrow. St. Jerome, in almost the

same words, says (*in hunc locum*), *Permittitur esurire corpus, ut Diabolo tentandi occasio præbeatur.*

3. "*The tempter coming said to Him.*" The same who is called the "*devil*"—the chief of the infernal hosts, Lucifer—is here, as well as 1 Thess. iii., called "*the tempter*," by excellence, being the principal and chief enemy of salvation, who solicits man to evil. The world and the flesh also tempt us; but the devil ever uses these to solicit us to evil. Temptation has different meanings in SS. Scripture. 1st. Temptation of trial, which has for object, to try and find out a thing, and prove us. In this sense, God often tempts man, not that He wants to know anything; but, He wishes to let us see what we are. In this way, He tempted Abraham, &c. There is also temptation of *deceit*, which has for object, to induce us to commit sin. In this sense, "*God tempts no one.*" (St. James i.) In this latter sense, the devil is called "*the tempter*" (see vi. 13) "*coming*," most likely, in the shape of a man. This is the common opinion. He wishes to be adored, and if he came in any other form, the Evangelists would probably have said so. The word "*coming*" implies, in a sensible, visible form. Hence, like that of our first parents, who, being in original justice, could not be interiorly tempted, this temptation was *exterior*.

"*Said to Him.*" Many think that the devil had blandly addressed our Redeemer and spoke of His being so long in that frightful desert; of the sufferings He was now enduring; of the testimony lately rendered to Him, that He was the Son of God, &c.; and, then, proceeded to tempt Him, and try if He was really such as is here recorded by St. Matthew. From St. Mark (i.) and St. Luke (iv. 2), it would seem, that the devil had frequently tempted Him during the forty days' fast. But now, seeing Him suffer from hunger, and show the effects of human weakness, he makes his grand assault, "*If Thou be the Son of God, command,*" &c. It is the opinion of some theologians, that Lucifer's fall arose from his jealousy at the dignity of the human nature, which was to be assumed in time by the eternal Word. Hence, aspiring after it himself, he refused to obey Christ and God. Hearing, then, the testimony borne lately to Christ by John the Baptist, and also the testimony from heaven, he may have suspected He was the Son of God, whose time for assuming human nature, according to the prophecies, had now arrived. On the other hand, seeing Him, like others among the crowd, poor, of humble, plebeian rank, and now suffering the pangs of hunger, he doubts if He be the natural Son of God, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father. Hence, he is anxious to find it out, in order to mar, as far as possible, His beneficent designs of redemption.

"*If Thou be the Son of God.*" as was lately testified regarding you, "*command,*" by the same Omnipotent Power, which "*spoke and all things were made.*" No need to have recourse to God by prayer—"command," immediately, without the intervention of any other power (he does not say, *do it*; but, "*command it*"), that these stones which lie scattered about, be converted into bread, so as to appease your hunger, which you have no other means of relieving in this frightful solitude. St. Ambrose, commenting on the cunning of the devil, says, "*He so tempts, as to explore; he so explores, as to tempt. While our Redeemer deludes him, so as to conquer; He so conquers, as to delude him.*" The tempter assails our Redeemer in what he conceives to be His weak point, under the circumstances, viz., gluttony; not that it would be gluttony for a hungry man to appease his hunger by means of bread lawfully procured; but, it would be gluttony in our Divine Redeemer to appease His hunger by means of bread procured through illicit means; and He surely would have employed illicit means, were He to exert His Divine power, in procuring bread at the suggestion of

Satan. He would commit a sin against religion, by holding communication with the fiend; and so He would procure bread by illicit means. He would, moreover, be partly guilty of a sin of vain glory, by a vain ostentation of His power, and distrust in God's paternal providence. Similar was the successful temptation of our first parents. It would have been an undoubted proof of Divine power to change the stones instantly into bread, by His mere word; "*dic ut hi lapides panes fiant.*" "Thou art caught in thy own words, O haughty tempter," cries St. Jerome. "For, if He have power to change the stones, in vain wouldst thou tempt such power; and if He have not the power, vain would it be for you to suspect and flatter Him, as Son of God." Some understand "*if*" to mean *since, whereas*, Thou art the Son of God. Then, the devil would have attempted to flatter Him, and so induce Him to commit sin. Probably, his pride so blinded Lucifer, that he thought he could succeed in this. It seems, most likely, that Lucifer knew our Redeemer to be God. This would seem probable from many parts of the Gospel. Whether he knew it at this time for certain, before this temptation, may be doubted. That the issue of the temptation may have removed his doubts seems probable. But from other parts of the Gospel, subsequent to this, it seems most likely he afterwards knew our Lord to be the Son of God. "*Art Thou come hither before the time to torment us?*" (viii. 29). Nor are the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 8) opposed to this. St. Paul does not say, the devil did not know Him to be "*the Lord of Glory.*" He only says, he did not know the wisdom of the mystery of Christ's death. For, had he known it, he would never have instigated the Jews to crucify Him, because he was thus bringing about what he wished to prevent, viz., the redemption of man, through the death of Christ. It is to be borne in mind, that our Saviour could not be *internally* tempted, nor even externally, except under the control of His own will.

4. "*It is written,*" in the Holy Scriptures, which are, *by excellence*, called the *writing*; and with the learned Jews the usual form of referring to the inspired Scriptures was to say, "*It was written.*" Here, our Redeemer opposes to the human prudence, which suggested the temptation of the devil, the Word of God, "*the sword of the Spirit,*" which, at once, without having recourse to subtle reasonings, helps us to dispel the attacks of our spiritual enemies. Our Lord so answers, that He neither asserts nor denies His Divinity; and, although He might, by the exercise of His Divine power, have at once put to flight His tempter, He prefers to do so, for our instruction in circumstances of temptation, by the power of His human nature, by meekness, humility, and constancy; and this also renders the humiliation of the demon the greater, when vanquished by weak man, rather than by an effort of Divine omnipotence.

"*Not in bread alone,*" &c. And if this be true of man in general, how much more so of the Son of God. Our Redeemer deludes the demon, who addressed Him as "Son of God," by merely placing Himself on a level with other men, and quoting, in justification of His own mode of acting, and of His reliance on God's providence, what is meant for man in general. "*Bread*" is used in Scripture to signify all kinds of aliment, which nourishes and sustains human life. The Greek for, "*doth live*" (*ζηοεται, shall live*), is a Hebrew form of potential, denoting what is confined to no definite time, but is permanently such—*will be able to live*. Hence, *lives*, in the present tense, better expresses the meaning intended.

"*But in every word that proceedeth,*" &c. "*Word*" is not in the original Hebrew (of Deut. viii. 3). But the Septuagint interpreters and the Vulgate translators have added it, as explanatory. The Hebrew is, "*by every thing that proceeds from the*

mouth of God," "*omni egrediente de ore Dei.*" The meaning is, that man's corporal life is sustained, not merely by these elements in common use, denoted by "*bread*;" but, by whatever means God's holy will and providence may appoint. He may, if He chooses, support them without any food, for any period He pleases, as He did Moses, &c., or He may render stones, iron, or any other substance nutritious for man's support; and hence, it was sheer folly in the demon to ask of Him to work a useless miracle, when God's providence, on which He placed such unhesitating reliance, had other means at its disposal to appease His hunger and prolong His life. The words, "*not in bread alone doth man live,*" are taken from Deut. viii. 3, where Moses, recounting the benefits conferred by God on the Jews, tells them that when they were straitened from want, God sent them manna from heaven for their support, to teach them, that it was not on bread alone (which failed them in the desert) man's life depended; but that God may adopt any means He may think proper to support man (as in the case of the manna), "*sed, in omni egrediente de ore Dei.*" *Every thing proceeding from His mouth*, means every thing God may wish or please to do, or command, for any purpose. Here, our Lord opposes the word of truth, to the seductive words and suggestions of the father of lies.

5. "*Took Him.*" Most probably, carried Him in the air. It could be no more unbecoming in our Lord (as St. Gregory observes, Hom. 16), to submit to this, than it was to allow Himself voluntarily to be crucified by the members of the devil, viz., the Jews, and their instigators, "*the world and the princes of this world.*" (1 Cor. ii., &c.) Some (with Maldonatus), think the devil "*led*" Him (St. Luke iv. 5). But the distance between the desert near Jericho and Jerusalem was too long a journey to be performed on foot in less than eight or nine hours. In that case, our Lord's fast would exceed "*forty days.*" For, it was *after* He had fasted forty days, the devil came to tempt Him (v. 2), and He gave over fasting only *after* the threefold temptation, which must occupy, therefore, only a very small space of time. St. Thomas and St. Chrysostom observe, that although our Lord was taken bodily and visibly, still, He so baffled the devil, that without the latter knowing it, He was invisible in His passage, as He was on other occasions (Luke iv. 30; John viii. 59). The reasons given by Maldonatus against this opinion, viz., that by such an exercise of power, the devil would have discovered himself, when he should rather, on the occasion, have transformed himself "*into an Angel of light,*" proves nothing; as the carrying of a man through the air, would not exceed the powers of "*an Angel of light,*" any more than it did those of the angel of darkness.

"*Then the devil took Him,*" &c. Hence, most likely, the order of the temptations is given more accurately here than in St. Luke (iv.), who gives a different order; but, does not use "*then,*" "*afterwards,*" indicating order of time or occurrence. St. Luke, most probably, gives the *substance*, not the *order* of the temptations.

"*Up into the Holy City,*" Jerusalem (as is expressly said by St. Luke), called "*holy,*" on account of the holy temple, and its being the seat of true religion of God at the time.

"*The pinnacle of the temple.*" Some commentators say this referred to the part in front of the temple, over the *Sanctum* and *Sanctum Sanctorum*, which alone was covered—the rest of the temple had no covering or roof—and that this part culminated in a "*pinnacle,*" which, however, had at its very summit a pretty large square or plain place, where workmen could stand for repairs and for cleaning the adjoining elevations. Others (among them Maldonatus), say that all the houses in Judea had flat roofs, where one could walk, sleep, &c., on which account it was

prescribed (Deut. xxii. 8), there should be a bulwark of a certain height. Here, then, the word, "*pinnacle*," refers to a lofty part of this protecting wall, more elevated, probably, than the adjoining parts. On this, the devil placed our Lord, so that He might precipitate Himself into the hall below, where the priests and pious worshippers there assembled could see Him, and have ocular demonstration of the Divine protection granted Him.

6. "*If Thou be the Son of God*," &c. Seeing himself baffled in the preceding temptation to gluttony, by our Lord's unshaken reliance on God's providence, which he proves from Holy Scripture, the devil has now recourse to the same Holy Scripture to tempt Him to presumption, to vain and excessive confidence, of which the sacred text here quoted would seem to be suggestive. The temptation to gluttony failing, he now tries vain glory. This temptation of ambition and vain glory often succeeds with those who have mastered the grosser passions; and although the preceding temptation involves vain glory *indirectly*, it is primarily and directly suggested here. If He be the Son of God, the promised Messiah of the Jews, let Him now show it by precipitating Himself; and thus secure the homage of the assembled priests and people. It is observed by commentators that the words, "*cast Thyself down*," are worthy of the devil, who, having by pride, cast himself down from his heavenly eminence, now wishes to cast men down from grace and God's friendship, to the very depths of sin. "*For it is written*" (Psa. xc. 11, 12). The devil here misquotes Scripture—a thing not unusual with his children, the heretics, in their attacks on the Church, which is His body. The words of the Psalmist had reference to those just men, who are, from necessity, thrown into circumstances of danger, out of which God's providence, in His own good time, is pledged, if expedient, for their salvation, to rescue them. But the words were never intended to apply to the case of those who voluntarily throw themselves into manifest and certain danger, whether moral or physical, out of which it would require a miracle from God to rescue them. Such would have been the condition in which our Lord would have placed Himself, had He yielded to the temptation of the devil, in this instance.

"*He hath given His Angels charge over Thee*," St. Luke adds, "*that they keep Thee*." Even according to St. Luke's account, the devil does not quote the whole text of the Psalm, which has, "*that they may keep Thee in all Thy ways*." Probably, he omitted these latter words designedly; because, they indicate that it was to men who, acting prudently in the discharge of their ordinary duties, are cast into circumstances of danger, and not to the rash and presumptuous, who voluntarily cast themselves into the precipice, the Divine promise of protection, referred to by the Psalmist, is made. And hence, these words would in no way serve his purpose and designs against our Divine Redeemer.

"*His Angels*," probably has reference to the Angel guardian whom God has placed to watch over and guard each of His faithful servants.

"*In their hands*," &c., expresses great care and solicitude.

7. "*It is written again*." "*Again*" may mean, *on the contrary, on the other hand*, as if in opposition to what the misquoted text of the devil suggested; or, it may mean, *also*, in the sense just given. SS. Scripture best explains itself, and our Lord points out to His Church, when assailed with corrupted and perverted quotations of Scripture by heretics, the course to be pursued, viz., to oppose true Scripture, properly applied, to Scripture perverted and misapplied.

"*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" Without giving the devil any insight into His Divinity, our Lord baffling him, quotes SS. Scripture, as any just man might do. These words are taken from Deuteronomy (vi. 16). "*Thou shalt not.*" &c. is written in the plural number in the Hebrew, "*non tentabitis.*" &c. "*ye shall not tempt.*" &c. However, the singular is included in the plural. Hence, the Septuagint and Vulgate versions have the singular. The words, "*to tempt God,*" have different significations in the SS. Scripture. Among the rest, it signifies to provoke to anger (Psa. lxxvii. 56; Acts xv. 10). But, it more generally signifies, to make an unnecessary, useless trial of any of God's attributes; to put, unnecessarily, to the test, His power, wisdom, mercy, &c.; to place oneself in such circumstances unnecessarily, either in the moral or physical order, as would require a miracle from God to rescue him from corporal or spiritual ruin. This forbidden trial of God's attributes may arise from *excessive vain confidence*, as, in the *natural* order, in the case of a man who would, unnecessarily cast himself down a precipice (as here) in the hope that God would work a miracle to deliver him; or, of a man who, neglecting study, would expect that God would extraordinarily endow him with knowledge, to be acquired only with care and labour; or, of a man who would neglect to sow, in the hope that crops would miraculously spring up. In the *spiritual* order, in the case of a man who would live in the immediate and certain external occasion of sin, hoping to receive extraordinary grace from God.

It may also arise from *diffidence*, as in the case of those who, in their straits and necessities, would murmur against God's will, and would expect an untimely manifestation of His providence, when such might neither contribute to His glory, nor to our ultimate good (Exod. xvii.; Psa. lxxvii. 17, 18). Such temptation of God is always a grievous sin, always prohibited. But, to hope that God would wonderfully exert His power and goodness in our favour, when we are involuntarily, through no fault of ours, placed in desperate circumstances, and to pray to Him to do so, if it be agreeable to His holy will, is no sin. Neither is it a sin to throw oneself into a lesser precipice to avoid a greater, as choosing the lesser of two necessary evils. Thus, some holy virgins, to avoid the greater evil of loss of chastity, precipitated themselves into the water. They regarded the loss of virginity a greater evil than the loss of life. Our Lord, by throwing Himself down, as suggested, would be doing what in other men would be a tempting of God; He would be making an unnecessary trial of His power and providence; and He did not choose to tell the tempter that He was God. He only answered according to the dictates of human prudence; and in reply to the text which the tempter applied to Him only as a just man, when He said, "*Angelis suis mandavit de Te,*" &c., He defeats him with his own weapons.

8. "*Again the devil took Him up.*" By our Lord's permission, the devil carried Him bodily through the air, from the pinnacle of the temple (as v. 5). The particles, "*again,*" "*then*" (v. 5). would show that St. Matthew gives the order of the temptations, which is neglected by St. Luke, who uses no such particles, denoting order or succession. The words, "*Begone, Satan*" (v. 10), also would indicate this to be the closing or last temptation.

"*Into a very high mountain.*" What this "*mountain*" was, the Gospel does not say; nor can we know for certain. Probably, it was some mountain not far from Jerusalem. Some say it was the mountain in the desert, Quarantania, where our Lord had fasted. It was afterwards called, *Mons Diaboli*.

"*And showed Him all the kingdoms of the world,*" &c. St. Luke adds (iv. 5), "*in a moment of time.*" There is a diversity of opinion as to how the tempter did this.

It does not seem likely that our Lord permitted the demon to act on His imagination. Hence, it must be done externally. Neither does it seem likely that it was merely on a painted chart it was done, as this could be done, in the plain or desert, without the demon taking Him to "*a high mountain*," which the Evangelists carefully record. Hence, it is said, with great probability, by many expositors, that the tempter, "*in a moment*" (St. Luke), that is, in the shortest space of time, from the height of the mountain, pointed with his finger in the direction where most of the kingdoms of the world were situated. "There, lies Asia; there, Europe; there, Syria; there, Rome;" &c.

"*All the kingdoms of the world*," most likely, refers to the greater part, or chief kingdoms among them.

"*And the glory of them*." While with his finger he pointed to the situation of the chief kingdoms of the world, he, most likely, by word of mouth, described "*their glory*," that is, their wealth, population, military powers, the attractive and seductive splendours of the palaces and retinue of their kings. As St. Luke pointedly states, that, he did this "*in a moment of time*," hence, he probably refers to the exercise of some peculiar diabolical agency or power. It may be, that the devil painted in the surrounding air the several kingdoms, and exhibited a panoramic view of all their worldly splendour and resources.

9. "*All these will I give Thee*," &c. It is remarked by commentators, that the devil does not, in this third temptation, say, "*If Thou be the Son of God*," because, in the two preceding temptations, he suggested, under the pretext of benevolence, what "*the Son of God*" might not feel it repugnant to do. Whereas, here, he proposes what "*the Son of God*" could not possibly do. In the first temptation, "*the concupiscence of the flesh*" had failed; so had "*the pride of life*," in the second. The devil now tries "*the concupiscence of the eyes*," that is, avarice, ambition, which prevail over many who are victorious over the two other principles which domineer in the world (1 John ii. 16); he primarily and directly sought, in the two preceding temptations, to find out if He was "*the Son of God*," and wished to obtain this knowledge, by inducing our Redeemer to do what was sinful; and hence, the Demon indirectly tempted Him to commit sin; in this, he primarily and directly wished Him to commit a most heinous crime, utterly opposed to the character of the Son of God, and thus *indirectly* wished to find out if He were "*the Son of God*." He calculated, that, by making such a proposition to Him, if he were the Son of God, He would at once indignantly repel the temptation by a declaration of His Divine rights, so arrogantly invaded. As in the first temptation to gluttony, was included a temptation to vain glory; and in the second, with vain glory was united the tempting of God; so, in this *third* temptation to avarice and ambition is included that of idolatry.

"*All these will I give Thee*." St. Luke (iv. 6), adds, "*for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will, I give them*." The demon now once more arrogates these Divine rights which occasioned his original fall, when he aspired "*to be like the Most High*" (Isa. xiv. 14). As he could not elicit from our Lord whether He was the Son of God, now being rendered more insolent and haughty from our Saviour's modesty and humility, he imagines Him to be a mere man, and feigns himself to be the Son of God, the view of whose glory in time to come was the source of envy and of his fall—that Son to whom "*were given the nations for inheritance*," and the possession of "*all power in heaven and on earth*," and as such, he claims supreme adoration.

The tempter lied in saying, "*to me they are delivered*," &c. (Luke). For, to God

alone, does it belong to bestow kingdoms on whom He wills—" *Per me reges regnant,*" &c. (Prov. xxi.); " *Non est potestas nisi a Deo*" (Rom. xiii.)—not to the demon, whose power is restricted in this world, as appears from the history of Job, and his asking permission to enter the herd of swine (c. viii. 31). He is termed " *the god of this world*" (2 Cor. iv. 4), and " *the prince of this world;*" because, of the power which, by Divine permission, he is allowed to exercise over the children of unbelief and sin, who are his slaves. But, he has no power to bestow kingdoms, as he falsely asserts here. He does not even mention the name of God. " *They are given to me,*" he don't say, by God, this name being so hateful to him. It is remarked by Toletus, that this promise was mendacious, as he did not intend giving them; false, he could not; arrogant, they were not his; deceitful, he promises to give in future; " *dabo,*" for a present service which he could not repay. Similar are his delusions practised on youth, to indulge present pleasure with a prospect of penance in old age, which is uncertain and cannot be insured. Neither can he give or take away temporal goods save by Divine permission.

" *If falling down,*" in the attitude of adoration, " *Thou wilt adore me,*" as God, and pay me Divine honours, as the bestower of these kingdoms and honours. It is remarked by commentators that our Redeemer was tried with all kinds of temptations which influence men to abandon God. All are reduced to " *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.*" (1 John ii. &c.) Hence, St. Luke says of the close, " *And when all the temptation was ended*" (iv. 13). Our Redeemer by His example, teaches us that the first temptation—of the flesh and of hunger—is to be overcome by hope in God's providence; the second—of pride and presumption—by the fear of God; the third—of avarice and ambition—by magnanimity and contempt of the world, its riches and honours. This triple temptation exhibited the three fountains of all vice—" *the concupiscence of the flesh,*" perfected in the flesh and its five senses; " *of the eyes,*" curiosity, perfected in the intellect; " *pride of life,*" in the will. Here we have an example what to do: " *Resist the devil, and he will fly from you*" (James iv. 7).

10. Our Lord had borne with patient meekness the contumely offered Him self in the preceding temptations, but now, on seeing His Father sacrilegiously and impiously assailed, He indignantly repels the offers and seductive promises of the tempter.

" *Be gone, Satan.*" The evil one is, in this chapter, designated by a threefold epithet. " *The tempter*" (v. 1), whose whole wicked occupation is to tempt men. He is indefatigable; he never sleeps or rests in waging a fiendish war against them.

" *The devil,*" the accuser of his brethren. " *Satan,*" a Hebrew word, to mean adversary, hater, enemy. (1 Peter v.) He is the sworn enemy of the human race, whom, like a roaring lion, he is ever going about seeking to devour, and precipitate with himself into hell.

" *It is written;*" with the same weapons, " *the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God,*" which He had so successfully wielded in the preceding temptations, our Redeemer now finally put His enemy to flight.

" *The Lord thy God thou shalt adore*" (Deut. vi. 13). For " *adore,*" the Hebrew has " *fear.*" But, with the Hebrews, " *fear*" denoted reverence, adoration, and every kind of worship due to God. From the context in Deuteronomy, it is clear that " *fear*" involved Divine worship. For, adoration is but the external sign of reverence and fear, and in SS. Scripture, under the fear of God, is contained all worship due to Him.

" *And Him only shalt thou serve.*" " *Only,*" is not in the Hebrew, but it is implied. Hence, our Redeemer quoted the words according to their meaning, which the arrogant

assumption of Satan suggested. From the prohibition contained in the verse (14), immediately following (Deut. vi. 14). "*You shall not go after strange gods.*" it is clear "*only*" is implied in the words of the preceding verse (13), "*and Him (only) shalt thou serve.*"

The word, "*serve*" (λατρεύσεις) although, according to etymology, applicable to all kinds of service and respect, as well that paid to men, princes, &c., as that paid to God, and employed in reference to creatures by the Septuagint and St. Paul—a servile work is called λατρεία (Lev. xxiii. 7)—still, both the Septuagint and St. Paul commonly apply it to the service rendered to God: and we are informed by St. Augustine (Lib. x. de Civitate Dei, c. 1), that λατρεία is used by the holy Fathers to denote the service and worship due to God alone. Hence, the distinction commonly made by divines between the worship due to God alone, *Latria*, and that paid the saints, *Dulia*, and that paid the Queen of the saints, *Hyperdulia*.

In like manner the word, "*adore*," (προσκυνήσεις) although, of itself, only signifying veneration, accompanied with external prostration of the body, and hence applied in SS. Scripture to creatures (3 Kings i. 16. 23, 31), still, from usage, it is employed to denote interior veneration, accompanied with its exterior expression, due to God alone—the Supreme, the highest Majesty.

In the words, "*Be gone, Satan, thou shalt adore the Lord thy God,*" our Lord still keeps the knowledge of His Divinity a secret from Satan. He does not say, thou shalt adore *Me*. But, like any other just man quoting Scripture, He says, "*Adore God alone.*" Neither does it seem that He banished him by His Divine power. Satan left Him *freely*, after being discomfited in the contest. Now, seeing, from his having been addressed as "*Satan*," *adversary*, that he was discovered, he felt himself fully vanquished, and left more and more in perplexity and doubt as to the nature and Divinity of our Lord.

11. St. Luke says, he left Him ("for a time"), with the intention of returning at some befitting opportunity. He did return again at His Passion, "*hæc est hora vestra et potestas tenebarum,*" and by his instruments sought to destroy Him.

"*And behold, Angels came;*" not only one Angel, but many. This shows the superior dignity of Christ, "*to whom the Angels ministered,*" as servants to their Master; creatures to their Creator; messengers to Him, that commissioned them. They came visibly and supplied Him with food to appease His hunger. When we are engaged in the manly struggle with the devil, and gain the victory over him, aided by God's grace, then, we cause to rejoice the Angels of God and the whole court, who will minister to our spiritual strength and aid us in our victory. But, as the devil only retires "*for a time*" from our Lord to return again, as he did, particularly at His Passion, which he instigated the world, *i.e.*, wicked men, and "*the princes of the world,*" his own satellites, the devils, to inflict; so, we, too, must be always on the alert, and prepared to our last gasp for temptation, so as to be warranted with our Divine Redeemer in saying in the end, "*The prince of this world has come, and in me he has found nothing*" that he might call his own, deserving of reprehension. We must never cease praying each day fervently and perseveringly for the great and special gift of final perseverance, "*magnum donum perseverantiæ usque in finem*" (Council of Trent, §§ vi. Canon xvi.), so as finally to overcome the temptations of the devil. If we obtain this gift, our salvation is secure. If we fail to obtain it, our perdition is inevitable. This is a point of faith defined by the Council of Trent. (§§ vi. Can. xxii.) This *great gift* cannot be strictly merited. It can be obtained only by humble prayer, "*suppliciter emereri potest*" (St. Augustine). We should never cease to pray, "*Lord, grant us the great gift of final perseverance.*"

TEXT.

12. *And when Jesus had heard that John was delivered up, he retired into Galilee :*
 13. *And leaving the city Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum on the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim ;*
 14. *That it might be fulfilled which was said by Isaiah the prophet :*
 15. *" Land of Zabulon and land of Nephthalim, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles :*
 16. *The people that sat in darkness, hath seen great light : and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up."*
 17. *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say : Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

COMMENTARY.

12. "*And, when Jesus had heard that John was delivered up,*" handed over to Herod by the Pharisees, from a feeling of jealousy, on account of the Baptist's influence and character among the people, and cast into prison by Herod out of pique, and from a feeling of personal offence, in consequence of the Baptist, reproaching him for his incestuous, adulterous connexion, with the wife of his brother Philip. The Evangelist refers here, by anticipation, to the Baptist's imprisonment, which he describes in its several details and circumstances. (xiv. 3, &c.)

It is also to be borne in mind, that the events recorded here did not occur immediately after the temptation. St. Matthew, as well as St. Mark and St. Luke, omits several incidents in our Lord's early missionary life recorded by St. John (i., ii., iii., iv.), such as the embassy of the Jews to the Baptist (John i.); also the sending by John to Christ to inquire if He were the Messiah (xi.); the miracle of Cana; the expulsion of the buyers and sellers from the temple; the conversation with Nicodemus, &c. Hence, St. Matthew dates the history of our Lord's public mission from the incarceration of the Baptist. Before this event, our Lord left to His precursor the great duty of preaching, although He had Himself engaged in the ministry of baptizing. But after John's imprisonment our Lord commences, as the sun following the day star, to preach publicly and solemnly. Our Lord, in order to avoid being delivered over to Herod—"His hour having not yet come"—retired into Galilee, to commence His preaching there, and thus fulfil the oracle issued regarding Him (15, 16); and by commencing to preach His Gospel in the most obscure and contemptible province of the whole kingdom, He wished to show that His success was solely the work of God, and not to be ascribed to human or worldly influences.

But why retire into Galilee to avoid Herod, as this Herod Antipas, or Antipater, son of the infanticide Herod the Great, was Tetrarch, not of Judea, but of Galilee? Was he not putting himself directly in his power? In reply, some say, that it was by the Scribes and Pharisees, who possessed great influence in Judea, the Baptist was, out of envy and malice, delivered up to Herod, whom they knew to have a strong, personal feeling against him; and Herod, under the pretext of a dread of revolution and public disturbance, probably, feigned at the suggestion of the Scribes, put him to death; for, it seems, they had a hand in the Baptist's death (xvii. 12). Hence, our Redeemer, to avoid being delivered over by them to Herod, with whom, being by religion a Jew, they had great influence, retired into Galilee from Judea. He had no fear of Herod, to whom, unlike the Baptist, He had given no cause for personal offence. While in Judea, the Roman Governor had direct jurisdiction over him. It

is most likely, that it was with his own connivance, the Pharisees handed over John to Herod.

Others, with Maldonatus, say, that it was to Upper Galilee, or *Galilee of the Gentiles*, which was outside Herod's jurisdiction, He retired. His native place, Nazareth, was in Lower Galilee, and subject to Herod. Here there is question of His second return from Judea to Galilee, and is the same as that mentioned (Mark i. 14; Luke iv. 14; John iv. 3-43). The first is recorded (John i. 43).

13. "*And leaving*," that is, passing by, declining to enter "*the city, Nazareth*," or dwell there. Our Lord did not wish to begin His mission in Nazareth, for the reason assigned (John iv. 44); and, moreover, He wished to verify the prophecies regarding Him.

"*Capharnaum*," situated in Upper Galilee, on the north-western side of the Lake of Genesareth. There was a great concourse there of Jews and Gentiles, engaged in traffic, and it suited as a good place for preaching the Gospel. There were two Galilees; Lower Galilee, situated on the south-western side of the Lake of Genesareth, and Upper Galilee, called also "*Galilee of the Gentiles*," because bordering on Phœnicia, it was inhabited by many Gentiles as well as Jews. Capharnaum was the dwelling-place of our Lord and of His disciples; hence, called "*His own city*" (ix. 1). It was conveniently situated, for the purposes of our Lord's missionary excursions, into the districts of Lower Galilee also; and being the chief town of Upper Galilee, and a great emporium of traffic, to which strangers flocked in crowds for commercial purposes, from all quarters, it was a fit place for giving extensive circulation to our Redeemer's works and teachings, and diffusing, far and wide, the light of the Gospel among Jews and Gentiles. Here, our Redeemer performed several miracles—healed the paralytic (Matt. ix. 2); restored sight to two blind men; healed the mute demoniac (Mark i. 21-28); cured the Centurion's servant (Luke vii.); cured the woman suffering from an issue of blood; raised to life Jairus' daughter (Mark v. 25); cured Peter's mother-in-law; miraculously procured the tribute money, &c. But, as the people of this city, thus favoured, were deaf to the calls of heaven, being addicted to the pursuit of gain and pleasure, and abused such signal graces; hence, our Lord's unsparing denunciations of them (xi. 23).

"*On the sea coast*." The Sea of Tiberias, or of Galilee.

"*In the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim*." It was situated in the tribe of Nephthali, near where, at its southern part, it meets the eastern part of Zabulon, in Lower Galilee.

14. "*That it might be fulfilled*," &c. Our Lord preached in this district, so that, from His doing so, the prophecy of Isaiah, in following verse, would be fulfilled.

15. "*The land of Zabulon*," &c., that is, the portion of the land assigned, in the distribution of Palestine, to the tribes of Zabulon and Nephthali.

"*The way of the sea*," that is, through these districts lies the great high road, by which the merchants and travellers from the Eastern countries, reach the great city of Tyre, and the Mediterranean "*Sea*," here referred to.

"*Beyond the Jordan*," which conducts from the East to the country beyond the Jordan. "*Beyond*," is said relatively to those living Eastward, especially the Assyrians, to whom, in its literal and primary signification, the prophecy refers. Relatively to the greater portion of the Jewish people, it was, *this side*, of the Jordan, *is Jordanem*.

Maldonatus thus explains it. He says—The Jews, when coming up from Egypt,

spoke of the country, which most of them were to occupy, as, *trans Jordanem*, as it really is, relatively to those coming up from Egypt; and when they were in possession of it, and lived in the country, they retained the same phraseology, and still called it *trans Jordanem*, although for them, it was, *cis Jordanem*.

Others understand "*the sea*," to refer to the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias, on the borders of which Capharnaum was situated; and "*the way of the sea*," to the district or country on the sea, situated on the off-side of the Jordan. "*The way of the sea*," is read in the accusative in Greek (*ὁδὸν τῆς θαλάσσης*). The Hebrew of Isaias (ix. 1) may be read nominatively, and so would be interpreted, as in apposition with "*land of Zabulon*," &c., with a conjunction ("*and*) *the way of the sea*," as if it referred to the other maritime districts—Capharnaum, Tiberias, Bethsaida.

"*Galilee of the Gentiles*," called also by this name for the reasons assigned (v. 13). "*Capharnaum*" is said, by the Evangelist, in verse 13, to be "*on the sea coast*," as if the Prophet Isaias (ix. 1) meant by it, "*the way of the sea*," the borders or coast of the sea, which would be verified only of the Sea of Tiberias. Hence, the second interpretation is the more probable.

This prophecy of Isaias is understood by many (among them Jansenius Gaudavensis, Calmet, &c.) to refer, in its primary and literal signification, to the providential liberation of Jerusalem, in the reign of Ezechias, from the hands of the Assyrians. The people of Jerusalem were in the greatest straits; nay, in the very shadow of death, when suddenly "*a great light*" shone upon them, and, in one night, the Angel of the Lord slew 185,000 of the hosts of Sennacherib (4 Kings xix. 35). In its mystical sense, as being an expressive type of the redemption through Christ, it is quoted here by the Evangelist; and, most likely, the Prophet himself intended, primarily, the mystical sense, or, the liberation through Christ; for, he at once bursts forth with the words, which have manifest reference to our Divine Redeemer, "*For a child is born to us*," &c. (Isa. ix. 6). The tribes "*of Zabulon and of Nephthali*," the first deported by the Assyrians (4 Kings xv. 29), are referred to here by the Prophet; for they, also, were the first of the Jewish tribes to follow our Redeemer.

16. "*Saw a great light*." God Himself in the flesh, or rather, the bright light of the Gospel, in contradistinction to the feeble, glimmering light of the Law and the Prophets.

"*Sat in darkness*," denotes their ignorance, despair, and despondency.

"*Shadow of death*," densest darkness, like that of the land of death or hell; or rather, like that in which they, who are approaching death, are hopelessly involved, such as is described by Job (x. 21, 22).

The Evangelist, when speaking of the light of the Gospel, which, before pervading the entire earth, was first to commence from Galilee, adduces the quotation from Isaias, as if the Spirit of God meant to convey that Zabulon and Nephthali and all Galilee, which first felt the exterminating fury of the Assyrians, would be the first to have the Sun of Justice shine upon them, in the personal residence and preaching of Christ. While these people of Zabulon and Nephthali were, like all the other nations of the earth, sunk in darkness, they saw, all at once, not an ordinary light, but "*a great light*," that essential light, which "*enlightens every man that cometh into this world*." St. Chrysostom remarks that, while in this state, literally sitting in the shadow of death, they themselves did not seek for the light, but "*it sprang*" up for them. This displays the infinite mercy of the Sun of Justice, who, eclipsing, as it were, the splendour of the Divinity in His Incarnation, displayed the light of His truth, in a manner suited to their capacity.

17. "*From that time,*" i.e., from the time that John was imprisoned, and our Lord took up His abode in Capharnaum, "*Jesus began to preach,*" publicly and unceasingly. No doubt, He had already preached among the Samaritans, and had baptized by His disciples, and, most likely, the miracles He had performed (John ii. 23; iv. 45) were accompanied with instruction. But, it was not till after the imprisonment of the Baptist, and the work of the precursor was accomplished, that the Sun of Justice publicly appeared, and our Lord publicly entered on the mission of preaching everywhere through Judea and Galilee. "*He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place*" (Luke xxiii. 5).

"*Do penance.*" He commences with the same theme as the Baptist's, to confirm his preaching, and show how thoroughly both were in unison (see iii. 1).

St. Mark (i. 15) says, our Lord preached, "*The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand,*" i.e., the time marked out by God for the coming of His Son, and the accomplishment of all the prophecies—the time so eagerly looked forward to by the entire Jewish nation, who were expecting their deliverer—has arrived. He is now among them, to open the gates of that kingdom so long closed against them. But, in order to obtain these spiritual blessings, now about to be plenteously dispensed, St. Mark adds, that our Lord proposed two things: 1st, to do penance; 2nd, to believe the Gospel (Mark i. 15), which is an abstract of all our duties, both in regard to faith and moral conduct.

TEXT.

18. *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers).*

19. *And he saith to them: Come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men.*

20. *And they immediately leaving their nets, followed him.*

21. *And going on from thence he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them.*

22. *And they forthwith left their nets and father and followed him.*

23. *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom: and healing all manner of sickness and every infirmity, among the people.*

24. *And his fame went throughout all Syria, and they presented to him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics, and those that had the palsy, and he cured them:*

25. *And much people followed him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.*

COMMENTARY.

18. "*And Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee,*" near which Capharnaum was built. Our Lord having now entered on His public mission, resolved on attaching to Himself as witnesses—*non possumus quæ vidimus et audivimus non loqui* (Acts iv. 20)—of His doctrine and miracles, a body of men to whom He was to delegate the plenitude of the power given Him by His Eternal Father, to be transmitted by them to faithful men, who were to be in succession, to the end of time, charged with the government of the kingdom, He was to establish, viz., the kingdom of His Church. Hence, in view of the withdrawal of His visible presence, He sets about choosing His followers and representatives; and these He takes from the foolish, base, and contemptible things of this world, to prove that the wonderful success of the Gospel

was solely the work of God, and not of man. While "*walking*," our Lord was meditating on the means of establishing and consolidating this kingdom.

"*Sea of Galilee*," so called, because on the confines of Upper and Lower Galilee. It is a fresh-water lake, about thirteen miles in length. The river Jordan flows through it. It is also called "*the Lake of Genesareth*" from the country of that name on its western shores; or from a town of that name, whose site was afterwards occupied by the city of Tiberias; also "*the Sea of Tiberias*," from the name of the town close by it. All large collections of water were, by a Hebrew idiom, termed seas.

"*He saw two brothers, Simon*," &c. This calling of Peter and Andrew is quite different from the introduction to our Lord, of Andrew, who before was a disciple of John, and the introduction, through him, of Peter to our Lord, recorded (John i. 42), as this latter can hardly be termed a vocation at all. The Baptist was not then in prison.

It is disputed whether the vocation recorded here, as also in Mark (i. 16-20), be the same, as that recorded in Luke (v. 1-11). Some expositors, with St. Augustine, Maldonatus, &c., say it is not. These maintain, that there were three calls of Peter, &c. The first (John i. 42), when there is question of a call to the knowledge and faith of Christ. The second (Luke v. 1-11), a call to familiar intercourse with our Lord. The third, the call to the Apostleship referred to here and Mark (i. 16-20). Maldonatus maintains, that, although on the occasion recorded by St. Luke, the Apostles "*leaving all things, followed Him*," and attached themselves to Him as His friends and disciples, and had been present at His miracles at Cana and Judea (John ii. 2, 11, 23; John iii. 22; iv. 2; Acts i. 21, 22); still, they were not *called* to the Apostleship, save on the occasion referred to here by St. Matthew, who expressly says, "*He called them*." With this call, they faithfully corresponded, never again leaving Him nor resuming their former occupation as a profession, save only for recreation and diversion, to banish the grief caused by His death (John xxi. 3). It is, however, more generally held, and seems more likely, that however, Matthew here and Luke (v. 1-11) may differ in detailing circumstances, they both refer to the same event. They both agree in detailing one fact, viz., that "*leaving all things, the Apostles followed Him*" (Matthew iv. 20-22; Luke v. 11); and it is by no means likely that, having *once followed Him*, they again putting their hand to the plough, looking back, rendered themselves unfit for the kingdom of God. The difference in the detailed account of circumstances given by Matthew and Luke in reference to the same event may be easily reconciled, if it be borne in mind, that it is usual with St. Luke to detail events more fully and circumstantially, while he refers to the order of events, only in a general way. Whereas, Matthew is more particular in detailing the order of events than the circumstances; and in the history of the Gospel, it is observable, that one Evangelist describes certain circumstances often omitted by the other, even when speaking of the same thing, and, *vice versa*; so that, by connecting both, we generally have a full and detailed account of the events they record. And, in reference to this call of the Apostles, one Evangelist in describing it, does not deny what the other records. When St. Luke says, "*they followed Him*," after the miraculous draught of fishes (v. 11), he does not say that this happened at the same instant. Hence, he does not contradict St. Matthew's narrative regarding the short interval between the call of the brothers, Simon and Andrew, and John and James, and the successive order in which they were called, "*and going on thence*" (v. 21).

The miraculous draught of fishes recorded by St. Luke as preceding, and leading to, the call of the Apostles (c. v.), St. Matthew only omits, but does not deny.

When St. Matthew says, our Lord saw "*two brethren casting a net into the sea*," his words may be verified of His own command to them to do so, as St. Luke (v.) states

The sons of Zebedee having assisted Simon and Andrew in the haul of fishes, were afterwards found by our Lord mending their nets, and then called by Him, who before that had called Simon and Andrew; and the former, having "*left their nets and their father*" (v. 22), which is put for all their possessions and occupations, and equivalent to the words of St. Luke, "*leaving all things,*" followed Him.

The order of events, then, was this: Our Lord was walking along the Sea of Galilee, and, pressed by the crowds who wished to hear Him, He entered Peter's boat moored to the beach, and from it taught the multitudes. He then performed the miracle, and immediately after called Simon and Andrew. The words (Luke v. 10), "*from henceforth thou shalt catch men,*" are perfectly similar to those (Matt. iv. 19), "*I will make you to be fishers,*" &c. For, when our Lord says that a thing will be, it is equivalent to His doing it. Then, proceeding a little further on, where the sons of Zebedee, who had before that assisted in the miraculous draught of fishes, had returned to mend their nets, He called them also, who, leaving all, followed Him.

"*Walking by the Sea of Galilee,*" and "*seeing two brothers casting a net into the sea,*" need not be understood to have occurred at the same time. He saw them casting the net after He Himself had commanded them to do so. (Luke v.)

19. "*Fishers of men,*" that is, destined to bring men into the Church and to life eternal. This is said in allusion to their former occupation. Our Lord is fond of borrowing examples from the ordinary occupations of those He addresses. The words are in accordance with the prophecy (Jer. xvi.), "*Behold I shall send many fishers, and they shall fish them; many hunters, and they shall hunt them,*" &c.

It is not undeserving of remark, what St. Luke pointedly records, viz., that it was up into Peter's ship, our Lord went to teach; that it was to Peter He specially applied the words, "*eris capiens homines*" (c. v. 10), all, no doubt, strikingly significative of the special prerogative of primacy of jurisdiction, granted afterwards to him, over the universal Church (Matt. xvi. 18, 19); "*lambs and sheep,*" i.e., pastors and people (John xxi. 15).

20. Recognising His voice, in whom they believed, on the testimony of John, whose miracles they witnessed, especially the latest one, in the capture of the fishes, they at once, while the Holy Ghost interiorly enlightened them, obey His call, generously resigning themselves to His Fatherly protection and providence, for all their future wants and necessities.

21. "*James, the son of Zebedee,*" to distinguish him from James, the son of Alphaeus, called James the lesser, "*and John, his brother,*" the Evangelist.

23. "*Went about all Galilee,*" accompanied by the four disciples referred to. He did not confine Himself, like the Baptist, to any particular place, where the people flocked to Him; but He Himself, the heavenly Physician, who came to save what was lost, went about in quest of those who needed Him.

"*All Galilee,*" which we learn from Josephus (Lib. iii. de Bel. c. 2), was very populous.

"*Teaching in their synagogues,*" out of the sacred books, the doctrines of salvation, and the meaning of their sacred oracles, so as to prepare them for the Gospel, and also "*preaching the Gospel of the kingdom*" i.e., proposing to them the joyous tidings regarding the near approach of the kingdom of Heaven (see iii. 1). The word "*Synagogue,*" according to etymology, like the word "*Church,*" means assembly or congregation; and generally, as here, the word denotes the *place*, where the Jews

were wont to assemble on Sabbath and festival days for religious purposes, prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures, explanation of the Law and the Prophets, &c. The use of synagogues is supposed by many to take its origin from the Babylonish Captivity, when the Jews, far away from the Temple, assembled together for religious purposes, especially in the houses of the Prophets, or of some other holy men, to hear religious instruction, or the reading of the sacred books (Ezech. xiv. 1; xx. 1; Dan. vi. 1). After their return from captivity, they had similar places specially set apart for religious purposes, for reading and explaining the law, and for prayer. They had only one place for sacrifice, viz., the Temple of Jerusalem. But, they had several synagogues. According to Josephus, the erection of synagogues was more ancient in other countries than in Palestine, where they appear, for the first time, under the Asmonean Princes. At the time of our Lord, wherever a congregation of Jews could be found, there was a synagogue. They were to be found in every town, and more than one in large towns or cities. It is said that, in the time of our Lord, Jerusalem alone contained 480 synagogues. Although, by law, the right of teaching belonged to the Priests and Levites; and by custom, to the Scribes; still, any one learned in the law might be invited and allowed to teach there (Acts xiii. 15). Hence, our Lord, although He belonged to neither class of Priests or Scribes, taught in the synagogues, as most suitable for propounding His doctrine, which He did not choose to preach in a corner, but in places most frequented, where it might reach all. He also preached outside the synagogues, wherever an opportunity of addressing large multitudes presented itself.

"And healing all manner of sickness," i.e., inveterate habitual bodily distempers of every kind, whether curable by the healing art or not, "and every infirmity," i.e., the languor and debility which precede inveterate confirmed bodily diseases.

24. *"Fame,"* the rumour of His doctrine and wonderful miracles. *"All Syria,"* a very extensive district, bounded by Cilicia, on the north; Egypt, on the south; the Mediterranean, on the west; and the Euphrates, on the east. In a word, it comprised all the countries between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. It embraced Idumea, Palestine, Syro-Phœnicia, Syria of Damascus, Arabia, Judæa, Pærea, Galilee, and Samaria.

"And they presented to Him," owing to the fame of His miracles, all kinds *"of sick people, that were taken with divers diseases, and torments," i.e.,* persons whose limbs were contracted from excruciating, torturing pains similar to those caused by being distended on the rack, *"and such as were possessed by devils,"* whom the devils bodily possessed and tortured. Of these demoniacs, we have several instances in the Gospel. The fact of their corporal possession is shown from the preternatural acts they performed, and the language they indulged in, and the mode in which our Redeemer employed, on more than one occasion, for expelling them, and the effects of such expulsion. *"Lunatics"* and epileptics were, in some cases, considered to be under demoniac influences; but, here *"lunatics"* are distinguished from demoniacs. The signs which showed the working of demons are mentioned in several cases in the Gospel. Our Redeemer recognises the operations of the evil spirit, whom He rebukes and chastises. Hence, the fact of demoniac possession did not rest on a mere popular persuasion. *"Lunatics,"* who suffered from changes of the moon, such as epileptics afflicted with the fallen sickness; *"those that had the palsy,"* paralytics, who suffered from paralysis of the limbs.

"And He cured them all." He confirmed His doctrine by miracles wrought to alleviate the miseries of the people, and bring comfort to the miserable and afflicted

25. "*From Galilee,*" which had tracts of land each side of the Jordan.

"*Followed Him,*" in His missionary excursions among the people, attracted by the fame of His miracles.

"*Decapolis,*" the district of the ten small cities on the east of the Upper Jordan, and the Sea of Tiberias, including also a portion of Southern Galilee, around Scythopolis. Authors are not agreed in numbering them. The principal of them is called by Josephus (de Bel. Jud., c. x.), *Scythopolis*, or Bethsan.

"*Judea,*" strictly speaking, comprised Juda and Benjamin, the southern part of Palestine, between Samaria and Idumea.

"*Beyond the Jordan,*" the districts of Ruben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasses, and the country east of the Jordan.

CHAPTER V.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter we have a full account of a portion of our Redeemer's admirable discourse, commonly called, the Sermon on the Mount, continued and concluded in the two succeeding chapters, in which He delivers a comprehensive abstract of Christian faith and morality, perfecting at the same time the Law of Moses, and correcting the false glosses and corrupt interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Evangelist first briefly describes the circumstances in which it was delivered (1-2). He next records our Redeemer's words, in which are pointed out the means for arriving at the secure enjoyment of happiness, commonly termed, *the eight beatitudes*; the very opposite of what mankind had hitherto supposed and followed, as the means of happiness (3-12). He admonishes the Apostles and all prelates, of their strict duty to edify and enlighten others by the example of a holy life and the shining light of pure doctrine (13-16). Meeting a charge to which His doctrine of perfection might expose Him, He shows, that far from being the enemy of the Law and the Prophets, He thoroughly fulfils and perfects them; and He declares, that the observance of the Law by His followers must far exceed that of those reputed to be most observant among the Jews, viz., the Scribes and Pharisees (17-20). He more fully propounds the precept of the Decalogue relating to homicide; and He shows that the moral guilt and eternal punishment attached to it are incurred by those who violate it not only by act, but by thought or word; and as a means of observing it, He points out the necessity of fraternal union and concord (21-26). He next explains the law on the subject of adultery, which He declares to be violated by deliberate and wilful thoughts; and He insists on the necessity of sacrificing every object, however near or dear to us, that may prove the occasion of sin (27-30). He explains the law of divorce (31-32). He next fully explains the law on the subject of perjury, and shows the extent to which it binds us (33-37). He next explains the *law of retaliation*, *lex talionis*, and shows the retaliation alone suited to a Christian—forgiveness, patience, beneficence (38-42). He fully explains the law relating to the love of our enemies, and He points out the motives for the perfect observance of this precept (43-48).

TEXT.

AND, seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him.

2. And opening his mouth he taught them, saying:

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

5. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

9. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake;

12. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And seeing the multitude, He went up into a mountain.*" St. Jerome thinks it was Mount Thabor, or some other mountain in Galilee. The first question which suggests itself here is, whether the discourse recorded by St. Matthew be the same as that in the Gospel of St. Luke (vi. 20-49), the circumstances of which are narrated in the preceding part of the chapter, particularly from v. 12 to v. 20, as also in St. Mark (iii. 13-19?) On this subject, there is a great diversity of opinion—some answering in the affirmative; others, in the negative. The opinion of those who say, that Matthew and Luke give the same identical discourse, seems the more probable. First, the commencement, the body, the termination of each discourse, in both Evangelists, is nearly the same. Each commences with the Beatitudes, and terminates with the beautiful simile of the house built on the rock, and of the house built on the sand. The body, or intermediate part, of the discourse in each, contains the peculiar doctrine of Christ, both as to the works to be performed, and the motives from which they should proceed. After it, both Evangelists record the cure of the Centurion's servant after He entered Capharnaum. Secondly; the difficulties against this opinion, on the ground of the difference of circumstances referred to by both Evangelists, are very trifling, and more apparent than real. This will appear clear if all the circumstances, as collected from the three Evangelists, be fully considered. They appear to be as follows:—Our Redeemer having cured the man with the withered hand (Luke vi. ; Mark iii. ; Matthew xii.), on the Sabbath day, betook Himself in order to avoid the fury of the Pharisees, to the Sea of Galilee, and after having performed several miraculous cures, He ascended the mountain in order to avoid the crowd, and there spent the whole night in prayer; and in the morning, "*when it was day*" (Luke vi. 13), He selected the twelve Apostles. After that, He came down into a plain or level ground, on the side of the mountain, and delivered this discourse in presence of His disciples, more particularly addressing some points of it, to His disciples, and other portions of it, to the multitude. For, "*the people, after Jesus had fully ended these words, were in admiration at His doctrine*" (Matt. vii. 28). They must, therefore, have heard it. Moreover, St. Luke, who says that at the commencement of the discourse, "*He lifted up His eyes on His disciples*" (vi. 20), tells us (vii. 1), "*that He had finished all His words, in the hearing of the people.*" What one Evangelist asserts the other does not deny; and in reconciling any apparent discrepancies between them, we should bear in mind the character which marks the Gospel of St. Matthew, and that which distinguishes the Gospel of St. Luke. St. Matthew is remarkable for passing over facts and circumstances, when they come not directly within his scope; but always careful in recording fully, and in detail, the words of our Redeemer. St. Luke, on the other hand, is very particular in recording facts and circumstances, but not so diffuse, as St. Matthew, in detailing words. Hence, St. Matthew omits the object of our Redeemer in ascending the mountain, the selection of the Apostles on the top of the mountain—for, he had not hitherto described his own call to be a disciple of our Lord; this he does (c. x.)—the descent into the plain, or level tract of ground on the side of the mountain, where the multitude awaited Him. All these facts are recorded by St. Luke, and only omitted, but not denied by St. Matthew. Whatever, then, St. Luke says of the "*plain*" (vi. 17), is not in opposition to what St. Matthew says of "*the mountain,*" as, in the supposition made, the open plain was a part of the mountain-side. When, then, St. Luke says our Lord selected His Apostles on the mountain (vi. 13), St. Matthew does not deny this. Neither does he deny the object of our Lord in ascending the mountain, viz., to pray. Neither

does he deny, that He delivered the discourse, in a standing posture. He only says, "*His disciples came to Him when He was set down,*" but he says nothing of the posture of His body, when delivering the discourse. Nay, St. Matthew would insinuate that the discourse was delivered by Him on an occasion different from that referred to when "*He sat down.*" For, it was to avoid the multitudes He "*went up into a mountain,*" and, then, the disciples came to Him, apart from the crowd. Now, the crowds heard the discourse; for, *they admired it.* It must be, then, on another occasion and in another place it was delivered, which St. Luke says was an open plain, and in a standing posture: although, indeed, it may be held that neither Evangelist records anything conclusive, as regards the posture of His body, whether sitting or standing, when delivering the discourse. St. Luke says, "*He stood in a plain place*" (vi. 17); but, He may have sat down *before* He commenced the discourse. St. Matthew says, He *sat*, when His disciples came to Him. But, He may have stood up before commencing His discourse. St. Luke gives but four Beatitudes; but, they contain the eight Beatitudes of St. Matthew; and the *first* and *last* coincide in both.

It seems most probable that St. Matthew records but *one* discourse delivered by our Redeemer at one and the same time. Indeed, a close, critical analysis of the discourse, as recorded by St. Matthew, composed of the several parts which constitutes a perfect discourse—its exordium in the Beatitudes, the proposition of the subject, the refutation of the objections, in the intermediate part, and its perfect peroration—would lead any judicious mind to the conclusion that it records one single, perfect discourse, and not two or more discourses, so connected by the Evangelist, as to present only the appearance of one. From this it follows, that St. Luke, who omits all that is recorded in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew, gives only a part of the discourse, or rather the disjointed parts of that delivered by our Redeemer; and, indeed this, too, would appear from a close examination of the discourse recorded by St. Luke.

It seems most likely, if not altogether certain, that this discourse was delivered, not a portion of it before the Apostles alone, and a portion before the multitude, but all at once, and entirely in the hearing of the Apostles, disciples, and multitude. It is evident that the sermon, as recorded by St. Luke, is a portion of that recorded by St. Matthew. Now, by neither Evangelist are we told that a portion was delivered before the Apostles alone, and a portion before the multitude—a circumstance the Evangelists would hardly omit recording, were it a fact. In truth, they record the contrary; for, St. Matthew tells us (vii. 28), that, "*the people were in admiration at His doctrine,*" after finishing His words. They, therefore, *must* have heard all His words. St. Luke tells us, the crowd came "*to hear Him*" (vi. 18), that "*He cured those who were troubled with unclean spirits;*" and without the slightest intimation that He retired a second time from them, St. Luke tells us, all at once, that He addressed them, "*lifting up His eyes on His disciples,*" an omission, if such it were, that would hardly occur in St. Luke, who is most accurate in detailing the actions of our Divine Redeemer. St. Luke also says (vii. 1), "*that He had finished all these words in the hearing of the people*" which are identical with the words of St. Matthew (vii. 28), and uttered in the same circumstances, after the example of the house built on the rock, and before he entered Capharnaum. The fact of our Redeemer having His disciples near Him, and raising His eyes upon them, proves nothing whatever against this opinion; since, even supposing the entire multitude to be present, it is but natural that His beloved disciples were near Him, and surrounded His sacred person. If He addressed some portions of His discourse to them in particular, and some to the multitude, He did no more than is done every day by men who address diversified congregations, composed of priests, and laity, and persons in several conditions of

life. Nothing more common than to hear portions of a discourse peculiarly addressed to one class of men, and peculiarly to another, for whom they may be *especially* suited, while each part, in a *general* way, may apply to all. Certain counsels of perfection were in a special manner addressed by our Redeemer, in this sermon, to His Apostles—certain admonitions which, in a general way, applied to the entire multitude. It seems, then, all but certain that this discourse was addressed all at once to the Apostles, disciples, and assembled multitudes, "*who came to hear our Lord, and to be healed of their diseases*" (Luke vi. 18).

"*And when He was set down.*" St. Matthew does not here say, He sat down when delivering the discourse. Nor, indeed, does it follow necessarily from St. Luke, that He delivered it standing. St. Luke only says, "*He stood in an open plain*" (vi. 17); but, He might have sat down before commencing His discourse, so that from neither account can the posture of His body, while speaking, be determined for certain.

"*His disciples came unto Him.*" St. Luke (vi. 13; Mark iii. 13), says, this coming was the result of His having "*called*" them to Him.

2. "*And opening His mouth.*" is understood by some to convey, that heretofore, up to the present time, He opened the mouths of the prophets, but now He opens His own mouth, to disclose treasures of wisdom hitherto concealed from mankind. St. Chrysostom understands the words to mean, that now He is about to employ a vehicle of instruction, viz., through words, different from that conveyed by the silent eloquence of His life and miracles. Others, whose opinion is very probable, interpret the words; now, He is about to treat diffusely of sublime and important truths, hitherto concealed in mystery. Opening one's mouth is a Hebrew idiom, serving as an introduction to a solemn and important discourse. Thus it is said of Job, "*aperiens os suum Job maledixit,*" &c. (Job iii. 1; Dan. x. 16). Our Redeemer had hitherto only touched, in a summary way, on subjects of faith and morals, saying, "*penitentiam agite,*" &c. Now, He treats diffusely on the chief subjects of Christian faith and morals.

3. "*Blessed.*" Our Lord proposes, as a stimulus to the practice of the Christian virtues, and perfection of life He is about inculcating, the attainment of what all men naturally aspire to, and necessarily seek, in all they do or suffer. This is *happiness*. It was to bestow eternal happiness, and rescue man from eternal tortures and misery, the destined punishment of sin, that Jesus Christ came upon earth. It was this, the whole course of His sacred life, death, and passion had for object. He declares, however, that true happiness is enjoyed in this life only in *hope*, which results from the adoption of the means for securing eternal happiness hereafter; or rather, that the means and practices necessary for securing true happiness, are the opposite of what men hitherto imagined, or what the philosophers taught. In truth, the eight Beatitudes announced by the Son of God are so many paradoxes, opposed to all that men hitherto conceived or imagined; as may clearly be seen on comparing each virtue leading to happiness, with the ideas and practices of mankind.

"*Blessed*" in *hope*, not in possession; "*blessed,*" in *via*, but, not yet, in *patria*; blessed, not in regard to the certainty of attaining the end, but in regard to future enjoyment, should there be no obstacle arising from want of perseverance.

"*The poor in spirit.*" This phrase is variously interpreted. The Greek word, *πτωχοι*, means those really poor, destitute of the goods of this world. It is opposed to the really rich in St. Luke (vi. 24). Our Lord pronounces, contrary to what mankind always thought, who regarded riches and worldly possessions as securing the summit of happiness, the state of poverty, to be a state of blessedness; but, lest it

might be imagined that poverty, *of itself*, conferred happiness. He adds, "*in spirit*," to show that it must be either poverty voluntarily assumed, or willingly borne for Christ's sake, and in a spirit of holy conformity to God's adorable will. The words, "*in spirit*," include in the beatitude, those who are in heart, and will, and affection, detached from the wealth which they possess, as has happened many of the saints of the Old, as also of the New Law, who, though in elevated positions, were still detached from this world, "*as having nothing, and possessing all things*" (2 Cor. vi. 10), "*as if they were not possessing anything*" (1 Cor. vii. 30).

The words, "*in spirit*," exclude one class and include another. They exclude those poor, who, being such, fail to conform to God's holy will, and bear not their sufferings and privations with patience. Many poor may be robbers, liars, &c.; poverty must be accompanied with other prescribed virtues. This is always supposed, when there is question of an affirmative proposition. They include a class not actually poor, viz., the rich, whose hearts are weaned from the wealth of this world. These words show that not to *all* who are actually poor, nor to *them* only, does the beatitude extend; not to *all* poor, but only to such of them as are so, *in spirit*, nor is it confined to them. It embraces those who, though in possession of riches, possess them as if they possessed them not, by detachment of heart. Indeed, our Lord, by exalting poverty, lays the axe to the root of all evils, which is the love of riches, "*radix omnium malorum cupiditas*" (1 Tim. vi.).

The words, "*poor in spirit*," indirectly mean humility, inasmuch as the love and possession of wealth are apt to render men haughty and proud. The words, "*in spirit*," are to be understood in each of the seven other beatitudes. For, it is to the heart and the interior disposition God chiefly looks, and, indeed, the chief scope of this Sermon on the Mount is to demonstrate the utter worthlessness of external, Pharisaical observances, unless proceeding from the heart, and from pure interior motives.

"*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" "*Theirs is*," at the present moment, not in actual fruition; but in certain hope, and in virtue of God's unfailing promise. Nay, even, they actually enjoy, by a kind of sensible foretaste and contented happiness, "*the kingdom of heaven*," which, by its overflowing abundance of heavenly riches and exalted honours, shall amply compensate for the present poverty and depression of God's elect. They shall reign with God, and entering into His rest, shall, in a certain sense, participate in His reign over all creation, "*fecisti nos Deo Nostro regnum et regnabimus super terram*" (Apoc. v. 10). Abundance of heavenly riches is a congruous reward for those who suffer the loss of all things here below. The same reward is attached to all the beatitudes; but, viewed under different respects, according to the different virtues which merit it, and the privations it is intended to compensate for. To *the poor*, it is granted under the name of a "*kingdom*;" to *the meek*, under the name of *land*, &c.

4. "*Meek*," not those who, from natural temperament or stoical indifference, quietly bear the evils of life; but, those who, from a Christian spirit, patiently endure the evils of this life; if sent by God, without murmuring or repining; if inflicted by man, without retaliation or vengeance, "*to no man rendering evil for evil, but overcoming evil by good*" (Rom. xii. 17-21). To these, who for God's sake submit to be deprived, by the wicked, of their inheritance, lands, and possessions here, is appropriately assigned as a reward, the inheritance of lands far more valuable, or, the rich inheritance of heaven, hereafter. "*Shall possess* (in the Greek, *shall inherit*) *the land*," is commonly understood after St. Jerome, of the land of the living, viz.

heaven, "*credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium.*" They shall possess the new heavens and the new earth. Indeed, in all these beatitudes, the rewards held out by our Redeemer are heavenly. They all refer to eternal happiness, viewed under different respects. *Meekness* is very appropriately placed after its kindred virtue of *poverty of spirit*. One is generally found associated with the other. The words of our Redeemer are very similar to those of David, "*mansueti hereditabunt terram et delectabuntur in multitudine pacis.*" (Psa. xxvi.) In the Greek version, this is placed third, in the order of beatitudes. "*Blessed are they that mourn*" (v. 5), is placed before it, second, in order.

5. "*Mourn.*" The words, "*in spirit*," are understood to affect this as well as the several other beatitudes. Hence, by *mourning*, here is meant, enduring sorrow for our own sins and those of others. It also includes, in general, sorrowing for the adversities and misfortunes of this world, the want of success in life, all patiently endured for God's sake, and in a spirit of resignation to His adorable will. It is opposed to those "*who laugh*"—"Woe to you who now laugh" (Luke vi. 25); the oppressed are opposed to the oppressors; the vanquished, to their conquerors. In this beatitude, our Redeemer pronounces, contrary to what the world has always believed and practised, that mourning and sorrow, as a state, is preferable to joy and mirth. But, then, it must be mourning, in the sense already explained. It does not extend to those who mourn from disappointed ambition, or for punishment deservedly inflicted and impatiently endured, nor to that worldly sadness which "*worketh death*" (2 Cor. vii. 10).

"*They shall be comforted*," hereafter in heaven, when God shall wipe away every tear from their eye, and there shall be no more mourning, nor sorrow (Apoc. xxi. 4). Even in this life, they sometimes receive consolation in the peace and joy of conscience, which is but a foretaste of everlasting joy to come, which made St. Bernard exclaim, "*If it be so sweet to weep for Thee, what to rejoice with Thee?*" Heaven, where no sorrow can enter, shall be their consolation. Everlasting comfort and consolation hereafter is a congruous reward for their virtuous and Christian sorrow and discomfort, for God's sake, in this life.

6. "*Who hunger and thirst after justice.*" In St. Luke, there is merely question of *hungering*—"that hunger now" (vi. 21). This can hardly be understood of a general desire of justice. For, our Redeemer speaks of *special* virtues, and the desire of justice referred to, is a *general* virtue. Moreover, He speaks of what the world dreads and recoils from. Now, the world esteems those who desire to be just and virtuous. And as it is opposed by St. Luke (vi. 25), to those "*that are filled*," on whom is pronounced a woe, "*shall hunger*" cannot mean spiritual hunger; nor "*filled*," filled with *justice*. Hence, it means real, bodily hunger, which mankind so much dread. Hunger and thirst, however, of themselves, will not secure happiness. Like all the other virtues to which happiness is annexed and promised, it must be "*in spirit*;" or, as St. Matthew expresses it, in the cause of justice. Hence, the words mean; blessed are they who are subjected to hunger and thirst, because justice is refused them, which refusal they bear patiently for God's sake, and to injustice inflicted on them for justice sake; or, because they endure such suffering rather than violate justice, regarded as a general virtue, *i.e.*, rather than act against conscience, or, who voluntarily endure hunger and thirst, for an increase in themselves of virtue and sanctity.

"*Shall be filled*," another form of expressing the fulness of joy to be reaped for

ever in heaven, "*inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus tue, torrente voluptatis tue potabis eos*" (Psa. xxxv. 9).

7. This beatitude is apparently subjoined to the preceding, as Mercy and Justice should go hand-in-hand. They supplement each other. "*Merciful*," who from tender, compassionate feeling, sympathize—and practically manifest this sympathy—in the miseries, whether corporal or spiritual, of others; who, therefore, are generous in forgiving injuries, as is referred to (Matt. xviii. 28), and by bearing their neighbours' burdens, fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. vi. 2), who are liberal in dispensing alms for the relief of bodily want. Hence, our Lord utters here what is a paradox with the world, who deem it better to receive than to give. This virtue of mercy also inculcates the practical relief of all the miseries, whether spiritual or corporal, of our neighbours. Those who have not the means nor the opportunity of relieving miseries, should have the disposition to do so. The Apostles had no means of relieving the poor; but, they had much injury to pardon.

"*They shall obtain mercy*," eternal life, which shall free them from all evils and miseries. It is an appropriate reward for those who show mercy themselves, to have mercy shown them, and a judgment of mercy—that is, a favourable judgment, passed on them. Eternal life is a mercy from God. It is the fruit of God's mercy and gratuitous gifts, who, "*in crowning our merits but crowns His own gifts*" (St. Aug. Epist. 105).

8. "*Clean of heart*," is understood by some, of a general purity of conscience, free from duplicity and deceit; free from the defilement of grievous sin, and wicked, corrupt thoughts and desires of sin, including purity of intention and candid simplicity, so opposed to the spirit of the world, which "*totus in maligno positus est*" (1 John v. 19). This general purity of heart, so necessary to see God, of course embraces exemption from the sins and desires of the flesh, and the practice of the holy virtue of purity. As bodily humours blind the eyes, and prevent them from seeing the sun; so, duplicity of heart and conscience, defiled with wicked desires, is a great obstacle to the vision, *i.e.*, the proper consideration of God in this life, and shall eternally exclude from the beatific vision in the life to come. In this life, God will not reveal Himself, nor make Himself known to such as do not look towards Him with simplicity of mind, purity of heart, without defilement, and with upright intention. Others understand the words, of cleanness of heart, in regard to carnal defilement, so that they understand the words, of the holy virtue of purity, both in thought and act. This virtue, which our Lord so much prized and inculcated on His followers; which He made the distinctive glory, in all its perfection, of His ministers and chosen spouses, was regarded as impossible in the world before His time, and utterly undervalued in practice. "*The concupiscence of the flesh*" was among the chief predominant maxims in the world. This purity of heart, whether understood of the virtue of chastity, or taken in a more general signification, was very appropriately subjoined to the preceding virtue of mercy, inasmuch as many externally exhibit great mercy and tenderness, who are the slaves of wicked thoughts and carnal indulgence. The word "*heart*," more directly refers to the affections than to the intellectual faculties of man; and hence, our Redeemer regards beatitude quite differently from the philosophers, who regarded the learned and wise as approaching nearer to God; or from the Pharisees, who only looked to external ablutions, regardless of the interior purity which they were intended to signify.

"*Shall see God*," who makes Himself, His perfections, His designs of mercy known to the simple and pure of heart in this life, and shows Himself to them, as He

is, "*face to face*," in the life to come. It is this last, that is held out as the reward, being another form of saying, they shall obtain the bliss of heaven. The seeing of God in this life, is a *means* towards the other as its *end*.

9. "*Peace-makers*," those who devote themselves to the work of reconciling such as are at variance, whether with themselves, their neighbours, or with God. The world regards those as happy who bravely overcome and trample under foot their enemies, and display their prowess and strength in doing so. But, our Lord pronounces those, on the contrary, "*blessed*," who, instead of making a great noise in the world, by the force of their prowess and strength in trampling on their enemies, and thus sow the seeds of further wars and dissensions, devote themselves to the quiet work of reconciling all who are at variance. The Apostles and Apostolic men are included, who, by preaching the Gospel of peace, reconcile man with God.

"*Shall be called*," i.e., shall be in reality, and publicly known to be, "*the children of God*;" like unto God the Father, who is the God of peace and not of dissension; to God the Son, who came into the world as peace-maker, to reconcile God with man, and man with himself and his fellows; and as sons of God—and this is the reward directly promised—they shall be sharers in His kingdom, as His heirs and co-heirs of His Son, Christ. This is another form of words promising the happiness of heaven.

10. "*Suffer persecution*." The preceding beatitudes consist in action; this and the following, which is included in this as a special part of it, consists in suffering, which is more perfect than action—"fortia agere, Romanum est; fortia pati, Christianum." Indeed, the preceding beatitudes entail this, inasmuch as men, by the constant practice of the preceding virtues, bring on themselves persecution from the world—"opprimamus justum, contrarius est operibus nostris." It will not secure this beatitude to suffer the just punishment of crime, although this may satisfy common justice and common equity; what is required here is, to suffer for doing, and for persevering in doing, some good and laudable act; or, for following a virtuous course of life, rather than escape punishment or persecution. "*Let no one suffer as a homicide*," &c. (1 Peter iv.), "*but, if for justice' sake, blessed*" (iii.); and, "*But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is praiseworthy before God*" (1 Peter ii. 20). Hence, those are referred to, who suffer for the faith; for the rights of the Church; for the practice of any Christian virtue. Pagans and infidels, if they suffer, cannot suffer for justice' sake. It is not the suffering that begets merit or makes the martyr, but the cause. The death of the wicked is not the glory of faith, but the penalty of perfidy (St. Augustine).

"*Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*." "*The kingdom of heaven*" is considered in this beatitude, as conferring great exaltation; since, it is congruous, that those who are trampled on and despised here below, should be exalted hereafter. In the first beatitude, it is regarded as conferring the abundance of heavenly treasures, on those who had no wealth, or were detached from the wealth of this world. It is to be observed that all these beatitudes are connected intimately with one another; and that happiness is not in store for the man who is possessed of one virtue, and devoid of another. Each of these general promises of beatitude implies the condition, *provided*, nothing else be wanting which is prescribed. Indeed, every affirmative proposition implies such a condition in the general assertion it may convey; and to each of these eight beatitudes, "*the kingdom of heaven*" is promised under a different name and title, suitable to each work, and to the exercise of each virtue.

11. He applies the preceding beatitude, which, in general, embraces all kinds of persecution for justice' sake, to His Apostles, since a new kind of persecution was in store for them, for Christ's sake; and He thus forewarns and forearms, and prepares them, for the sufferings that were to await them for preaching the Gospel.

"*When men shall revile you,*" and use contumelious, *opprobrious language* towards you, in your *presence*; it is the same as "*reproach you*" in Luke vi. 22 (*ονειδισωσι*).

"*And persecute you,*" by action—it is more limited than "*persecution,*" in verse 10 or verse 12, "*persecuted the prophets*"—"and lay all manner of evil against you." in your absence, charging you with all sorts of crimes, wicked motives, and intentions.

"*Falsely,*" unjustly calumniating you, and placing false charges to your account.

"*For My sake.*" They thus speak ill of you, and persecute you; because, you profess and preach My faith, My Divinity, My death and sufferings to redeem the world, My revelation, hitherto concealed from the world—a subject of scandal and folly to unbelievers—and My moral precepts and commandments, so opposed to the corrupt dictates of flesh and blood.

St. Luke has four members in this sentence: "*shall hate you,*" which refers to interior feelings; "*shall separate you,*" shall exclude them from all human intercourse, "*shall reproach you,*" the same as "*revile you*" in St. Matthew; "*and cast out your name as evil,*" i.e., render their name detestable and abominable among future generations.

12. Our Redeemer not only promises eternal rewards to those who suffer thus on His account; but He also invites them, far from being cast down by adversity, to rejoice at the prospect of the measureless magnitude of the reward in store for them. He also proposes, as a motive for rejoicing, the example of the ancient prophets, whose successors they are in a still more exalted sense, who were persecuted in the several ways already foretold to the Apostles. Nothing new was about to happen them; they are only to be subjected to the treatment of the saints of old. Hence, He warns them not to be disturbed, but rather to rejoice, when these persecutions shall befall them; for, to the same treatment were the saints of old, whom the world venerates and admires, subjected. They should be prepared to suffer like indignities, and like persecutions, in the same cause.

TEXT.

13. *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men.*

14. *You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid.*

15. *Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house.*

16. *So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

COMMENTARY.

13. "*You are the salt of the earth.*" "*You are*"—you ought to be. You are destined by Me to be, and are selected by Me to be such, which, by My grace, you shall be in reality, "*the salt of the earth.*" Salt is the symbol of wisdom, which is partly in the intellect, partly in the will or moral conduct. These words are addressed to the Apostles in particular, whom our Redeemer wishes to stimulate to patient suffering for His sake, and to zeal in executing His commands, by pointing out the exalted position which He assigns to them, as leaders and guides of His people. By several similitudes, He shows the character and position they hold. The

Prophets were the salt of Judea only, the Apostles "*of the (entire) earth*," hence the superiority of the latter. The twofold property of "*salt*," viz., to impart flavour to insipid food, and preserve from corruption, symbolizes the character and office of the Apostles, in their relations with the world. What salt is to the food, seasoning and preserving it from corruption, they should be to the rest of mankind. By their preaching and holy example, they should render men, otherwise insipid before God, whom He would "*vomit out of His mouth*" (Apoc. iii.), agreeable in His sight, and freeing them from the corruption of sin, preserve them for eternal incorruption. Our Redeemer here implies that the whole earth, of which the Apostles were the salt, was sunk in the corruption of sin. "*If salt lose*," &c., there is nothing to restore to it its properties of flavouring and curing. If the teacher teaches what is false, or scandalize by his corrupt and immoral life, who can correct or restore him? The implied answer is, that although it be a thing, that may happen, it is a thing very difficult of accomplishment, and that rarely happens, as, indeed, a sad experience every day confirms.

"*It is good for nothing but to be cast out.*" It is unfit for any useful purpose, like the wood of the vine (Ezech. xv. 2, 3, 4). St. Luke (xiv. 35) more fully expresses it: "*It is neither profitable for the land nor for the dunghill*," &c. Other things, even if they miss their destination, may be utilized—gold, food, &c.—not so salt, once it loses its properties of savouring and preserving. The cure of the perverse teacher is almost hopeless. Rarely, and with difficulty, is he converted. Degradation and misery here, by being contemptuously trodden under foot by the passers-by, and eternal degradation under the feet of demons, hereafter, is generally, it is to be feared, the portion in store for him.

"*But, if the salt lose its savour.*" Some say salt *never* loses its savour; hence, our Redeemer here supposes what is false. Resp. The assertion is only hypothetical. Our Redeemer does not say it does lose its savour. It is a supposition like "*si angelus de celo evangelizaverit*," &c. (Gal. i. 8.) *Rock* salt, it is said, loses its savour, but not sea salt. Shaw and other modern travellers say, they saw, in their travels in the East, salt that lost its savour. Many commentators here say there is allusion made by our Lord to *bitumen* taken from the Dead Sea, with which the victims in the temple were besmeared. This, after exposure to the air, lost its savoury qualities, and was then thrown on the floor of the temple, to prevent the priests from slipping in wet weather.

14. He once more illustrates the character and duties of the Apostles by the example of *light*. They were destined to enlighten the world by the *soundness* and *purity* of their teaching and example—a world, sunk in the darkness of sin and error. Both illustrations refer to the doctrine of faith and morals, with which they were to enlighten and reform the intellects and minds of mankind. *Salt* especially refers to morals or example; *light*, to teaching. "*You are*," that is, you *ought*, and are destined, to be, and shall be, if you correspond, as is meet, with My grace. They are a *light*, but having only a brilliancy borrowed from *without*, and imparted by Him who is of *Himself* "*the true (essential) light, which enlightens every man*"—the true Son of Justice itself.

"*A city*," &c. Here is a third example tending to the same thing, viz., to stimulate the Apostles to zeal in the discharge of the great Apostolic functions confided to them, of enlightening and saving the rest of mankind, by the preaching, in season and out of season, of the Gospel of truth, and by the constant, open and public example of saintly lives. There is an ellipsis here of the words, "*You are a city set on a mountain.*"

15. These words have the same object as the preceding, to stimulate the Apostles to shine as lights before the world, to enlighten the surrounding darkness, and impart to all the world the light of a holy, spotless life, and of pure teaching. As a city on a hill cannot be hid, so neither can the Apostles, from their exalted position, be concealed from the eyes of men; and, hence, their duty, to live so as to edify men. As no one lights a candle for the purpose of concealing its light, so neither did God constitute the Apostles as the lights of the world, in order to hide their light and detain the truth of God in injustice. Their duty is quite plain, viz., to diffuse this light far and near; to be deterred by no obstacles, in the free exercise of the exalted commission confided to them by God Himself, and to show forth the brilliancy of their virtues, and by their example to allure others to God.

16. Here, we have the explanation and application of the foregoing parables. In the preceding, He shows, that their light should shine before men. In this, He shows *how* it is to shine, *how* they are to discharge the duties of enlightening and saving the world, imposed upon them, and the end or motive they should have in view, viz., the glory of their Heavenly Father. In this verse is insinuated, that unless our *works* correspond with our *teaching*, we cannot bring men to God. The particle "*that*," denotes the *consequence*, not the *end* or *motive*, at least the ultimate one. Our *ultimate* end or motive should be, not our own personal glory, nor the praises of men; but, God's glory. Hence, this is not opposed to vi. 1, "*THAT you may be seen by them*," as in these latter words, is conveyed the ultimate end or final motive of catching the applause and securing the praise of men. "*Sit opus in publico, ut intentio maneat in occulto*" (St. Gregory). Those, then, violate the injunction of our Lord—1. Who indolently hide their light under a bushel, or traffic not with the talent confided to them. 2. Whose lives correspond not with their teaching. 3. Whose motives are corrupt, viz., vanity, desire of applause, and not God's greater glory.

TEXT.

17. *Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

18. *For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.*

19. *He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

20. *For I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

COMMENTARY.

17. Our Redeemer now guards against the imputation, to which the promulgation of loftier precepts than those to be met with in the old Dispensation might expose Him, viz., that He meant utterly to abolish the Old Law—by showing that, far from that, He came to accomplish and fulfil it. Others (Maldonatus, &c.), connect this with the preceding verse, thus: He wishes to impress upon those who "*were the light of the world*" now "*their light should shine before men*," both in their conduct and teaching, viz., by a more careful and perfect observance of the law, following His own example, and by not imagining, that, as members of His household, they were released from strict observance.

"*To destroy*," by violating the precepts and abolishing the teachings of the law

By "*the law*," which sometimes comprises the entire Old Testament, are meant here the five books of Moses, and by "*the Prophets*," the rest of the books of the Old Testament. The books containing the law are put for the law itself. Our Redeemer fulfils the *moral* law, the chief portion of the law, which, as comprising the *natural* law, was *unchangeable*, by a more clear exposition of its precepts, and by incorporating it with His own law; by observing it Himself, and teaching others to do so; by giving grace, whereby it might be fully observed; by superadding counsels of perfection so useful to ensure its full observance. He fulfilled the *ceremonial* law, by substituting the reality for the *figure*; by bringing about the *realities*, which in their mystical signification these ceremonial precepts typified; (by executing a promise one rather fulfils than destroys it). He also fulfilled the ceremonial law, by inculcating the spiritual obligations it signified. Even when abolishing the ceremonial precepts in their literal acceptance, He fulfilled them; since it was predicted of them that they were to be abolished after a time. He fulfilled the *Prophets*, since He fully verified and accomplished the ancient prophecies. He fulfilled the *judicial* law, by commuting temporal sanction into threats and promises of a spiritual and eternal character.

18. Far from coming to destroy and utterly abrogate the law; on the contrary, I solemnly assert, "*Amen, I say to you*," that until the end of the world, when "*heaven and earth*," that now are, *shall pass away* in their present corrupt form, and be changed into a "*new heaven and a new earth*" (Apoc. xxi. 1), the slightest point of what the law contains (and the same is true of the Prophets), shall not be left without its due fulfilment. The ceremonial law shall be fulfilled in the *realities* which it typified; the *judicial*, in the rewards of a higher and more exalted kind which it shall administer, the *moral*, in the unchangeableness of its preceptive binding moral force, at all times, under pain of sin, and in the sanction which its observance or violation, in the smallest degree, shall entail; although, indeed it is to the completion and exhibition of the promises of the law He here refers; He also refers to the addition of precepts completing and perfecting the law. "*Amen*," if prefixed to a sentence, is assertive; if after it, it is confirmatory. Our Redeemer, in employing it, as He does frequently, conveys that peculiar significance should be attached to the subject which it precedes. In the Old Testament, it is never found at the beginning of a sentence; sometimes, however, it is found at the end of a sentence. In the New, it generally commences, but seldom ends a sentence. "*Heaven and earth pass away*," i.e., till the end of the world, when the present heaven and earth shall change their form, and there shall be "*a new heaven and a new earth*." Others interpret the words: Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, and cease to be (a thing utterly impossible), than any part of the law be unaccomplished; just like the phrase, "*It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle*," a thing utterly impossible.

"*One jot*," (ἰωτα ἐν), *iota unum*. The *iota* is supposed to have been placed here for the Hebrew *jod*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. "*One tittle*" (κεφαία), the very point of the smallest letter, the smallest mark distinguishing one letter from another, v.g., G from C (St. Jerome); κεφαία, "*tittle*," is the little top or distinguishing mark of a letter, which indicates the most trivial precepts or ordinances of the law. "*Till all is fulfilled*" (see above).

19. As, therefore, I am come to perfect and fulfil the law, whosoever shall violate even what may be regarded as one of the least of these commandments, which I am about to propose, either from the law, or superadded for perfection's sake by myself.

He calls them "*least*," not in themselves ; but as they may be regarded by men, and by the Pharisees, who regarded the external act, *e.g.*, of homicide as sinful ; but not the deliberate intention of perpetrating it.

"*And shall teach men so.*" The particle, "*so*," is interpreted by some to mean : As I am just now teaching ; so that it refers to the man who teaches well, but through frailty, violates the commandments, not practising what he teaches. In this interpretation, "*least*" means, shall be lowered in his grade, and not obtain the place he would otherwise be entitled to. For, the violation of the least commandment, such as to be angry from a sudden impulse, would hardly utterly exclude from heaven. Others, more probably, understand the words to refer to the man that violates the least precept, and shall teach others they may lawfully "*do so*," and violate the commandments after his example. Such a man "*shall be called*," that is, in the judgment of God, shall be pronounced *to be*, and shall *be in reality*, "*least*," that is, utterly excluded from heaven ; or if, by "*the kingdom of heaven*," we mean the Church, such a man shall be excluded from the society of the faithful, as a propounder of erroneous doctrine, and ultimately from heaven, unless he repent. "*Least*" is used in preference to *excluded*, as containing an allusion to the *least* commandment.

Our Redeemer is manifestly alluding to the Pharisees, who not only violated the law in certain points relative to interior acts of the will ; but also taught men that interior acts and intentions, *e.g.*, of adultery or murder were not sinful, and should not be heeded ; that they might be indulged in with impunity, and without moral guilt.

In the preceding verse, our Redeemer shows how He came to fulfil that portion of the law which pertained to promises, types, and judicial sanction for its observance. In this verse, He shows how He fulfilled the *moral* law—the chief and most important branch of the law—by giving an example of observing it Himself, and teaching others the duty of observing it ; and by declaring that any man who, like the Pharisees, violates the law (in even what men would consider its least precepts, as the Pharisees regarded deliberate sins of thought), would merit everlasting exclusion from the Church and the kingdom of God's glory.

"*But he that shall do and teach* ;" he does not add, "*the least commandment*," because it is required to observe *all the commandments*, and teach properly in regard to them.

"*Shall be called*," shall be in reality, and pronounced so in the judgment of God, "*great*," deserving of the highest place and dignity in that house where "*there are many mansions*," in which "*star differs from star*" in brilliancy and glory, and in which, those who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity. "*Great*, and *least*" are antithetical. So are, "*shall break, and so teach*," and "*shall do and teach*."

20. "*For I tell you*," &c. Here is contained an illustration and particular application of the preceding verse. "*Least in the kingdom of heaven*," means exclusion from it. "*For, I tell you . . . shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"

"*Your justice.*" The observance of the moral law is called "*justice*," because it is by keeping the law, we are justified. "*Factores legis justificabuntur*" (Rom. ii.) ; "*Si vis ingredi vitam serva mandata*" (Matt. xix. 17). "*Scribes*" (see ii. 4) ; "*Pharisees*" (see iii. 7). Our Lord here introduces "*the justice*" or observance of the law by the Scribes, &c., because they were regarded as the most observant among the Jews, and still it was defective. Their observance of the law was confined to external acts ; they regarded of no consequence interior acts of the will, and taught others the same. Hence, they shall be "*least* ;" in other words, "*shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.*" What our Redeemer condemns, is not their observance of the law, apart from the

motive and false teaching, as far as it went; but, He condemns it as *defective*, not going far enough. Hence, He says, "*unless it abound more*," exceeds theirs, be fuller, more perfect, either as regards teaching or practical observance, it will not do.

This verse may be connected with the preceding, of which it is an application and clearer illustration; or, with verse 17, thus proving, He came not to destroy the law, since He requires a more perfect observance of it than was ever practised or exhibited by even the most observant among the Jews, who were the teachers and guides of the people, viz., "*Scribes and Pharisees*." The more perfect observance required, as is inferred from the following, consists—1st. Not only in *external* observances merely, but in the regulation of the internal thoughts and feelings. "*Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her*," &c. 2ndly. In avoiding what the law merely tolerated from necessity, v.g., bill of divorce, usury, vengeance, &c. 3dly. In observing the law, not merely according to the letter, as explained by the Scribes, &c., of whose exposition we have an example in the words, "*odio habebis inimicum*," but according to its spirit and the intention of the Divine legislator.

TEXT.

21. *You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.*

22. *But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

23. *If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee;*

24. *Leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.*

25. *Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*

26. *Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou re-pay the last farthing.*

COMMENTARY.

21. Our Redeemer now proceeds to fulfil the law (v. 17), so far as regards the moral or chief portion of the law is concerned. In the first place, He clears away the false glosses and interpretations put upon the precepts of the moral law by the Scribes and Pharisees, whose justice He condemns, inasmuch as they not only themselves violated certain important precepts of the law, which they regarded as of little value—those "*least commandments*" (v. 19); but also taught "*men*" (to do) "*so*," i.e., do the same, by their false interpretations of the law. In the next place, it seems most likely that in the following discourse, wherein as legislator, He promulgates the New Law, He even, in a certain sense, corrects the Old Law itself, not by destroying it, as containing anything bad, or anything opposed to the New Law—for, in itself the law was "*holy, spiritual*" (Rom. vii. 12-14), and every one of its precepts is "*holy, just, and good*"—(Rom. vii. 12), but, as imperfect; for, "*it brought nothing to perfection*" (Heb. vii. 11). He supplies its defects, and perfects it, by more clearly evolving the precepts of the natural law which it contained, by superadding evangelical counsels, and certain points of explicit faith. He opposes Himself and the law He promulgates to Moses and his law as the *more perfect* to the *less perfect*, as the covenant of a better hope, containing and fulfilling better and more exalted promises,

imperfect testament, which was only intended as an introduction to His (Heb. vii. 19). This shall be more clearly seen in the interpretation of each passage.

"*You have heard,*" when the books of Moses were read for you, as usually happens each Sabbath in your synagogues (Acts xiii. 14, 15), "*that it was said to them of old,*" i.e., it was enjoined by the law of Moses, on your fathers, to whom it was first promulgated in the desert of Mount Sinai. He omits the name of Moses, lest the mention of it might be any way invidious, as He is about perfecting His law and more fully developing it; and although the law given by Moses was the law of God, still we find Moses introduced as its promulgator. "*Lex per Moyssem data et.*" (John i.)

"*Thou shalt not kill,*" by which is prohibited the taking away our neighbour's life out of revenge or on our own personal, private authority; or, without some justifying cause, arising out of the just exercise of the commands of public authority, or necessary self-defence.

"*And whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment,*" i.e., liable to capital punishment, or death, as a homicide, such being the punishment awarded by the law to homicides when brought before the tribunal called, "*the Judgment.*" These latter words are not found in the law, but they are there in substance. The terms expressive of the punishment of such a crime in the law are, "*dying, let him die*" (Lev. xxiv. 17); or, as our Lord is quoting the words, according as they "*heard*" them from the Scribes and Pharisees, who gave the substance of the penalty contained in the law, the word, "*judgment,*" may mean, liable to be brought before the tribunal appointed to investigate into the cause of murder, as to whether it was justifiable or not, which is but an epitome of the several enactments on the subject (Exod. xxi.; Deut. xix.), and in case it was wilful, death was the consequence.

Cardinal Baronius (Tom. i. Annal.) relates, from the Talmudists, that there were three tribunals among the Jews. The first, ¹consisting of three judges, who took cognizance of trivial cases, such as cases of theft, rapine, &c.; the ²second, composed of twenty-three judges. This tribunal, called "*the Judgment,*" referred to here, took cognizance of causes of grievous moment, and was armed with the power of life and death. The third, ³called the Sanhedrim—a term of Greek origin—composed of ⁴seventy-two judges, had jurisdiction in matters of the greatest moment, involving the public interests of religion and the State. It is a matter of doubt whether this had anything in common with the Council of Seventy Elders appointed by Moses to assist him in the government of the people (Num. xi. 16, 17, 24). This latter tribunal (Sanhedrim) existed at Jerusalem only, and exercised judgment there only. The other tribunals, of three and of twenty-three judges, were appointed in the several cities and tribes (Deut. xvi. 18). It is recorded (2 Par. xix.), that a similar arrangement was made by king Josaphat.

22. "*But I say to you.*" Here our Redeemer fulfils the law by more fully explaining it, and correcting the false interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, who confined the prohibition of the precept to mere external acts, as is implied in the foregoing, and by the extension of the prohibition in this verse, in accordance with the natural law, to internal acts of consent, as entailing grievous moral guilt, and the heaviest punishment. "*But I say to you.*" "*I,*" the legislator of the New Law, the teacher sent down from heaven, the Prophet like unto Moses, raised up by God for you (Deut. xviii. 18). "*I say to you,*" that not only he who commits homicide, but, "*whosoever is angry with his brother*" (to which the Greek adds, *εὐρη, without cause*, but rejected by St. Jerome as spurious and as introduced by copyists). "*Angry*" conveys the state of strong, passionate resentment and excitement, desiring (as is implied

by the subject matter) and tending to deprive our neighbour of life, or inflict on him grievous bodily harm—just displeasure and indignation at the conduct of others, if moderated by reason, is not prohibited here as sinful—“*shall be in danger of judgment*,” that is to say, shall sin mortally and incur eternal death, just as in verse 28, the internal desire of adultery, though punishable by no earthly tribunal, entails grievous moral guilt.

“*Raca*.” This supposes the internal feelings of grievous anger referred to in the preceding, to proceed to reproachful language. “*Raca*,” a vile, contemptible, brainless wretch. This involves a greater amount of guilt and a heavier mortal sin than the mere internal feelings of anger, similar to that of which the Council of Seventy-two took cognizance among the Jews, and shall entail a heavier punishment in hell.

“*Fool*,” a still more reproachful term, probably involving a charge of impiety and irreligion; since, among the Jews, impiety was regarded as *folly* of the greatest kind. The use of such a reproachful term involves a degree of guilt so great, that there is no analogous tribunal among the Jews to take cognizance of it, and it deserves a punishment more grievous than that inflicted by the Sanhedrim, such as the sword or stoning; it deserves, that one would burn in the unceasing fire of Gehenna, an emblem of hell.

“*Hell fire*.” No doubt, hell fire is the punishment reserved for the preceding sins also, according to the interpretation now given, which supposes them to be mortal; but, to express the heinousness of this latter sin, which involves the most grievous insult and contumely, aggravated by the manner and circumstances of its utterance, relative to cause and persons, and their relation to each other, our Redeemer, who speaks in accommodation to the notions of His hearers regarding the guilt of sin, as seen from the tribunals before which it is brought, wishes to convey, that there was no tribunal on earth to award punishment analogous to that entailed by the sin of grievous contumely and insult, expressed by the word, “*fool*.” Others understand the passage thus: they say, that in the two preceding kinds of sin there may be some grounds for doubting their heinousness; and hence, they should form the subject of investigation. But, as regards this latter one, there can be no doubt whatever. It is clearly mortal, and, without further investigation, deserving of eternal punishment. However, looking to the kinds of crime adjudicated on and punished by the tribunals, “*Judgment*” and “*Council*,” with which our Redeemer compares internal anger and the uttering of the contumelious word, “*Raca*,” the former interpretation seems the more probable. The sin in each case is supposed to be mortal, of course, if deliberately indulged, but differing in degree, and the intensity of the eternal punishment it entails. Similar are the degrees of mortal sin described by St. James (i. 15), “*when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death*.”

“*Hell fire*.” In Greek, *the Gehenna of fire*. This *Gehenna*, or Valley of Ennom, so called from the man who possessed it, called also “*the Valley of the children of Ennom*,” was a delightful valley near Jerusalem, at the foot of Mount Moria, irrigated by the waters of Siloe, as we are informed by St. Jerome, also Josue (xv. 8; xviii. 16). In this valley, the Israelites, imitating the impiety of the Chanaanites, erected an altar and burnt their children as victims to Moloch, the god or idol of the Ammonites, called by others, Saturn; and as they were wont to drown the cries of the children by the beating of drums or cymbals, the place was called on this account, *Topheth* (Jer. vii.; 4 Kings xvi. 13; xxi. 20; Isa. xxx. 33), from *Toph*, a cymbal or drum.—Others derive *Topheth* from *Toph*, a cymbal, owing to the music practised there as being a place of joy and merriment.—In this valley, the Israelites sacrificed their children (Psa. cv. 38).

This valley the pious king Josias afterwards rendered abominable by casting into it the bones of the dead (4 Kings xxiii. 10). The Lord, moreover, menaced the Jews (Jer. vii. 32) that the valley would no longer be called *Topheth*, nor the Valley of the son of Ennom; but the valley of slaughter, that they should bury their dead in Topheth, and that the carcases of this people should be meat for the fowls of the air (xix. 12), and that He would make it the receptacle of all the abominations of Jerusalem. After their return from the Babylonish captivity, the Israelites so abominated this place, that, following the example of the pious king Josias (4 Kings xxiii. 10), they cast the carcases of the dead and all the filth of the city into it; and as perpetual fire was needed to consume all this offal, it was termed the *Gehenna of fire*. Hence, on account of its abominable destination, and the impious rites performed in it at the sacrifices offered to Moloch, it was a fit emblem of the receptacle of the damned, and most likely it was really regarded as an emblem of hell, although it is used in SS. Scripture, for the first time by our Divine Redeemer, in this sense.

"*Of fire*," to show the everlasting burning which continues there. It means, *Gehenna*, ever on fire, a fit emblem of hell.

Beelen holds, that hell fire is not directly referred to here; that the words only mean, that such a man is deserving of a punishment more grievous than that awarded by even "*the Council*," which was stoning or the sword. He deserves to be cast into the Valley of Ennom, ever on fire, and to be burnt there. This is, no doubt, a fit emblem of hell fire, and was regarded by the Jews, as such.

23. "*Therefore*," is expressive of a plain inference from the foregoing, as if He said: Such being the obligation of avoiding a grievous violation of fraternal charity, no less in thought or word, as explained by me, than in action; and such being the grievous punishment which every such violation shall entail, should you recollect, in the discharge of the most meritorious duty, such as the offering of sacrifice—an act most agreeable and pleasing to God—that you gave "*your brother*," i.e., any fellow-creature, just cause of offence, by calling him "*raca*," or "*fool*," &c., you should at once interrupt that work, should it be practicable to do so, and become reconciled, by making due reparation to the offended party, or at least form the resolution of doing so when practicable, and as soon as circumstances shall permit; otherwise, your work shall be displeasing to God, who prefers fraternal concord and the necessary duty of charity to any gifts whatsoever. "*Offer thy gift*," i.e., sacrifice, a work most pleasing to God. This has reference to Jewish sacrifices. But it refers still more so to the sacrifice of love and concord, so far as it concerns us, viz., the Blessed Eucharist—"unum corpus multi sumus," &c. (1 Cor. x. 17.)

The allusion to sacrifice may also arise from this, that, probably the Scribes taught, that all violations of the precept, "*thou shalt not kill*," might be expiated by sacrifice. Our Redeemer here teaches the contrary; and shows how our justice must exceed theirs in preferring the duty of charity to sacrifice. The necessary duty of charity and just reparation must be first fulfilled, if we wish that God would be pleased with any act of religion, be it ever so exalted. If this be true of sacrifice, how much more so, when less exalted and less meritorious works are in question.

"*Thy brother hath any thing*," &c. This supposes that he is the *offended*, we the *offending* party; he the party to whom reparation is due from *us*. Should we be the *offended* party, and "*have any thing against him*," all required of us, as a *matter of duty*, is to pardon him from our hearts for the *personal* offence, as, in that case, he is the party to seek reconciliation and make due reparation. I say, as a *matter of duty*, for, high Christian perfection might suggest more; also there is question of *personal*

offence; for, a man is not bound to forego injury in property; and he should, moreover, on public grounds, uphold, by the prosecution of evil-doers, the well-being of society.

24. "*And go first to be reconciled,*" &c. The mode of doing this must depend, in a great measure, on circumstances. We must go actually and seek the necessary reconciliation, unless circumstances and motives of prudence should point out an opposite line of conduct, as the most conducive to the permanence of charitable relations in future; and in this latter case, it is preceptive to go in *spirit* and *in will*. Indeed, like all affirmative precepts, this is to be a good deal modified by circumstances and considerations of prudence.

25. A continuation of the subject of reconciliation with our offended neighbour, and a new motive for doing so. In the preceding verses, is urged its necessity, in order that our other actions would be pleasing to God. In this verse, it is urged, in order to avoid the punishment which the neglect or voluntary omission to make due reparation would entail upon us.

"*Thy adversary*" (*αντιδικος*), an antagonist in a law suit; thy offended or injured fellow-creature. The words of this verse are, in their literal sense, allusive to the case of litigants on their way to a court of law, where the offending party wisely arranges matters, settles the case with his "adversary," to avoid the penalty which the judge would award, perhaps the disgrace of imprisonment which might ensue. But, in their spiritual sense and application to the subject in hand, which is chiefly intended by our Redeemer under the guise of legal and forensic terms, all of which need not be applied to the chief subject of illustration, they are meant to convey, that we should be reconciled with our offended brother, "*the adversary,*" "*who has something against us*" (v. 23), while "*in the way,*" i.e., in this life, journeying to eternity and approaching nearer and nearer to the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, before which we must all "*appear*" (2 Cor. v. 10). "*Lest perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge,*" by remitting the matter to God, who will take cognizance of it in His own time, or, lest his just cause and the injury unatoned for should plead with the judge against thee.

"*The officer,*" the devil and his angels. It is not, however, necessary to apply every word and part of a parable to the subject illustrated. The whole idea is, lest neglecting to discharge the duty of just reconciliation and reparation, you die in your sins, and be condemned by the just judgment of God, to everlasting and unchangeable punishment in the gloomy prison of hell, out of which there is no escape or ransom. It is not necessary, as regards the chief subject, to inquire into the application of the word, "*officer,*" or "*last farthing,*" &c. These terms are merely used to perfect the parable; and, probably, not intended to be applied to the chief subject.

26. In this is conveyed the rigour with which the sentence of the Eternal Judge shall be carried into execution in the life to come. If there be question of condemnation for mortal guilt, and of hell's prison, whereas, full satisfaction—"the last farthing"—can never be made, the culprit shall not leave it for eternity. Some writers, from the particle, "*until,*" regard it as possible that reparation would be made in the case, and the accused party would leave his prison; and hence, they derive an argument in favour of the doctrine of Purgatory. But this does not necessarily follow from the text. It can be understood, and, most likely, ought, of never-ending punishment, as St. Augustine says, "*donec penas aeternas luent,*" i.e., always paying eternal punishment. The meaning would be, "you must remain there, till

you pay the last farthing, and if unable to pay it, then you shall never leave it." If there were question of venial sin, then, the interpretation would be different. But it serves no purpose to be adducing weak or dubious arguments in proof of a doctrine clearly established from other undoubted sources. It only does mischief. And the enemies of the faith will be sure to enlarge upon the weak arguments, as if no better were forthcoming, leaving the undoubted arguments unheeded. (See comment. on 2 Peter i. 15.)

TEXT.

27. *You have heard that it was said to them of old : Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

28. *But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

29. *And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body be cast into hell.*

30. *And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish rather than that thy whole body go into hell.*

31. *And it hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce.*

32. *But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery : and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.*

COMMENTARY.

27. "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" After treating of the sins springing from the *irascible* appetite, so natural to man, our Lord now proceeds to treat of the sins appertaining to the *concupiscible* appetite, not less natural to man *in* his present fallen state. This precept—the sixth—immediately follows in order, the preceding in the Decalogue.

"*Adultery,*" under which is included fornication, and all other external acts of illicit intercourse.

28. "*But I say to you, that whosoever shall look upon woman to lust after her.*" "*To,*" may mean the *consequence* of looking on her ; so that lusting after her is the result of looking, which implies that the act of coveting or lusting must be *fully deliberate*, and *voluntarily indulged in*. The mere look is not sinful. It is only the look, followed by deliberate desire and consent, that is so. Or, it more probably means, the end, the purpose for which he looked on her (*προς*), viz., for the purpose of indulging in desires of sinning with her, if the occasion or opportunity offered. In either interpretation, it is supposed, that in order to be a mortal sin, a thought or desire against chastity must be deliberately indulged and fully consented to. What is said of *looking* applies equally to the other senses, *hearing, touch, &c.*, which are the inlets of sin and death. Sin is equally committed through them, if they are made the organs for admitting into the soul the deliberate desire of committing the external prohibited act. Although *human laws*, which cannot directly reach the soul, cannot punish or take cognizance of *internal desires*, the latter shall entail mortal guilt before God, the just Judge and searcher of hearts. But to be sinful, desires or thoughts should be wilful and deliberate, as is clear from the words of our Lord just explained. Wicked

thoughts, if resisted and battled against, far from being sinful, only prove a source of greater merit. In this our Redeemer perfects the Old Law, and corrects the false interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. Although coveting another's wife was prohibited by the Ninth Commandment of the Decalogue ; still, some expositors say the Scribes understood the Ninth Commandment of that concupiscence, or those internal sins of adultery merely which were made known by some external act, and only in circumstances in which they would lead to the violation of the Sixth Commandment, which, according to them, was confined to the commission of the act of adultery, but did not extend to internal acts of consent, as such. Josephus, a Pharisee, speaking of Antiochus Epiphanes, says he committed no crime in merely wishing to rattle the temple of Diana, "*quia voluntas tantum, ac non perfecisse sacrilegium non videtur res supplicio digna.*" (Lib. xii. ; Antiq. c. xiii.) Moreover, it is likely they confined the prohibition of the Ninth Commandment to coveting their neighbour's wife only, but not to the coveting of women in general. No doubt, the Ninth Commandment did prohibit internal acts of consent ; but it did not declare so expressly or so precisely as our Lord did, that looking on a woman with impure eyes and coveting her entailed the guilt of adultery. Our Redeemer, then, more fully explains the Sixth Commandment ; first, as forbidding, under pain of incurring the guilt of adultery, mere internal acts, without any external manifestation. Secondly, as referring not only to our neighbour's wife, but to any woman whatsoever. "*Shall look ON A WOMAN.*"

From these words may be derived a very salutary lesson as to the custody of our senses, particularly when the holy virtue of chastity is in question, "*pepigi fœdus cum oculis meis ut non cogitarem quidem de virgine*" (Job xxxi.) ; "*ne respicias in mulieris speciem.*" (Eccles. xxv.)

29, 30. From the allusion made by our Redeemer in the foregoing to the scandal or spiritual ruin sometimes occasioned by looking at a woman, He takes occasion to inculcate a general lesson regarding the necessity of avoiding scandal in general, and the occasions of sin, and of putting away any person or thing, be they ever so dear, useful, or necessary for us, that may prove a source of scandal, be the removal or avoidance of such object ever so painful, and should it cost us the greatest sacrifice in life. The words of these verses are to be understood metaphorically. The idea is borrowed from the treatment used by surgeons, who, on seeing danger to the body from any diseased limb or member, at once amputate it, be it ever so necessary, in order to save the rest of the body. This exaggerated metaphor never can bear a literal signification, as it is never necessary to amputate any member of our body to avoid sin ; and hence, it is never allowed. But, in its exaggerated form, the metaphor conveys that if such amputation were necessary (which it never is or can be) it should be done, if the salvation of our soul required it. "*The right eye*" and "*the right hand*" give an idea of objects very dear, very near, useful, and necessary for us. The words, "*pluck it out,*" "*cast it off*"—a very painful operation, imply great torture and suffering in parting with it. It is better we would part with this object, however dear, however great the pain or privation such parting would entail ; and sacrifice the gratification its presence gives us, than after enjoying it for a time, suffer, on its account, in the end, the eternal torments of hell. The allusion to the looking after a woman in preceding verse suggests the idea of "*the eye,*" in the first place, as one of the inlets of sin, and one of the most necessary members or organs of the body. "*Scandalize thee.*" The word, *scandal*, primarily and literally conveys the idea of a stumbling block of offence against which one jostles and is made to fall. Transferred to a spiritual signification, it means, whatever is the occasion of our spiritual ruin, that is, whatever

is the occasion of our falling into mortal sin, which causes the spiritual death of the soul. There is hardly any point of Christian morality upon which we should observe such vigilant care as upon the subject of avoiding the proximate occasions of sin; nor is there any other point upon which those who are charged with the care of others, should so inexorably insist as upon this, particularly if there be question of the external and proximate occasion of sins against chastity. A melancholy experience unhappily attests that the only means of obtaining a victory on this point is flight. In this point particularly, owing to the corruption of human nature, the words of the Holy Ghost are verified, "*qui amat periculum in illo peribit.*" Every other means of avoiding sin, every other remedy, shall prove unavailing if this be neglected. As a general rule, it may be laid down, that so sure as a man voluntarily exposes himself to the proximate and external occasion of this sin in particular, so surely shall he fall. Hence, the rigour with which the most approved spiritual writers treat this case, although mild in regard to almost every other; so close is the connexion they trace between frequenting the occasion and the commission of sin (see St. Alphonsus Liguori in his Moral Theology and all his spiritual works "ON THE PROXIMATE OCCASIONS OF SIN"); also our Commentary (1 Cor. vi. 18).

31. ^(a) "Whoever shall put away his wife," &c. In this form of expression, it is clearly conveyed, that putting away or divorcing one's wife, even for a just cause, was not commanded, but only permitted or tolerated in the Old Law (see xix. 8). All that was commanded, as is here expressed, was, that in case a man divorced his wife, she should get from him a (written) "bill of divorce," and it was only after the wife left her husband's house, furnished with this written bill of divorce, the act of separation was valid. As regards the power of divorcing their wives granted to husbands in the Old Law, it is to be observed that the law of Moses permitted this divorce solely on account of some uncleanness, (Deut. xxiv. 1, &c.) Many understand the words, not only of a sin against purity, but of any uncleanness, whether *physical or moral*. At a later period of Jewish History—after their return from captivity—a great dispute arose on this point; and in our Redeemer's time, the Jewish doctors of the two famous schools of Hillel and Schamai, took different views of the question; the former contending for the sufficiency of any cause, however trifling; the latter restricting the privilege of divorce to the case of adultery (see Matt. xix. 1-10), (Dixon, vol. ii. 296).

2ndly. The privilege of divorcing was not given to the wife, but to the husband only, although, towards the end of the Jewish kingdom, females of the higher class, claimed to themselves, after the example of Roman matrons, the right of divorce. The law of Moses permitted the aggrieved wife not to give a bill of divorce herself, but to seek it at the hands of the judge (Exod. xxi. 10).

3rdly. This permission of the law of Moses most probably dissolved the vinculum of the former marriage, so that it was dissolved in foro interno et Coram Deo (see c. xix., commentary on).

4thly. The husband could receive back his divorced wife, after giving her a bill of divorce, unless she was married to another; but not, once she was married to another (Deut. xxiv. 1-4; Jer. iii. 1), thus consulting, for public decency, lest husbands might seem to have given their wives for a time to another, which would savour of a community of wives. He was commanded to give a bill of divorce, in order to consult for the condition of his wife; and this also was hampered with conditions, all of which should concur in order to render valid the bill of divorce. The consequence was, that the bill of divorce was rendered very difficult; and time

Divorce a vinculo - none.

" " *two of mensa (Separu.) - grave cause - none permanent*
ST. MATTHEW, CHAP. V. *but Adultery* 23

for deliberation was given to the husbands in case they rashly resolved in sending away their wives, even for a just cause (see Carrière de Mat. vol. ii., p. 170-179). Our Redeemer altogether abolishes this law of divorce, so far as the vinculum or marriage tie is concerned, which is never dissolved after consummation, if there be question of Christian marriages. (Concil. Trid. §§ xxiv. Can. vii.—See c. xix.)

32. Our Redeemer here declares, that if a man put away his wife without a justifying cause—"excepting the cause of fornication"—he incurs the guilt of adultery, to which he unjustly exposes her. For, *quantum in se est*, he makes her commit adultery, and a man incurs the guilt of the sins, which by his injustice he occasions (Rom. i. 32). But if the husband have a just cause for sending away his wife, and for dismissing her, *quoad thorum*, then, should she commit adultery, she herself is guilty of the sin, by putting herself perversely in the occasion, and not he. Although there are several causes that justify a separation, *quoad thorum et mensam* in the New Law, in which the rights of the husband and wife, as regards the marriage contract, are made equal (1 Cor. vii. 4; Mark x. 12), still, our Redeemer only instances that of "adultery," because, it was the only cause peculiar to the marriage state, arising out of it exclusively, that justified a separation. The other causes usually alleged, as warranting a separation, would justify a departure from any contract whatsoever, e.g., the attempt of one party to bring the other into sin, and cause his spiritual ruin, and so with the rest. Moreover, "adultery" is the only permanent cause of separation, even after the party so guilty had done penance, and made all possible reparation. Even if this were done, the innocent party is not bound to take back the adulterous party. The other causes are not permanent, but temporary, ceasing, when the offending party becomes repentant.

That the vinculum, or tie of marriage, is not dissolved in case of adultery, as the Catholic Church teaches in regard to consummated Christian marriages (Conc. Trid. §§ xxiv. Can. xii.), is clear from the general form, without any exception, used here by our Divine Redeemer, that "whosoever shall marry her that is put away" (whether with cause or without it; no distinction is made), "committeth adultery." The same is clear from St. Mark x. 11, 12; Luke xvi. 18. St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 11) gives the wife who left her husband, even with a just cause, no alternative but to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. That St. Paul speaks of a departure from a just cause, is clear from his giving her the option referred to. Had she left without some justifying cause, the Apostle would have given her no such alternative. He would have commanded her to return at once and fulfil her plighted obligations (see c. xix. 4-9).

TEXT.

33. *Again you have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not forswear thyself: but thou shalt perform thy oaths to the Lord.*

34. *But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God:*

35. *Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.*

36. *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

37. *But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil.*

COMMENTARY.

33. Here, our Lord passes from the sixth to the second precept of the Decalogue. "*Thou shalt not forswear thyself.*" These words are found in substance, although

not identically (in Exod. xx. 7; Levit. xix. 12; Deut. v. 11), where the original Hebrew word, *seau*, signifies, thou shalt not take the name of God *in vain*, or *falsely*. For, "*in vain*," means also, "*falsely*." Hence, our Redeemer here quotes only the substance of the law. These words have reference to *assertory* oaths.

"*But, thou shalt perform thy oaths*," &c. These words are quoted substantially from Numbers xxx. 3. They refer to *promissory* oaths, and mean, that whatever we promise the Lord to do, whom we invoke by oath, we should fulfil it. By others (among them, Suarez), these latter words are understood to convey that in our oaths we should swear by the true God, and not in the name of idols, "*et per nomen ejus jurabis*." (Deut.)

34. "*Not to swear at all*." The Scribes and Pharisees understanding the words, "*in vain*," to mean only *falsely*, which signification also, as has been observed, the Hebrew word, *seau*, bears, interpreted the prohibition contained in the Second Commandment, as simply meaning, "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in a lie*;" and hence, they inferred that it was not prohibited to invoke His holy name irreverently, on every occasion, no matter how trivial or unimportant the cause; 2ndly, as appears from the following verses, and xxiii. 16, they interpreted the words, "*the Lord thy God*," strictly, so that in this commandment was not conveyed the prohibition to swear by creatures, whether common, such as heaven and earth; or those consecrated to God, such as Jerusalem, the Temple, &c. They also taught that such oaths were not binding, save in cases favourable to their own avarice (xx. 16).

35. It was, then, in reference to these false notions of the Pharisees on the subject of oaths, that our Redeemer tells us "*not to swear at all*," in the sense in which an oath was allowed by the Scribes and Pharisees, *i.e.*, not to invoke the holy and adorable name of God *rashly* and *without cause*, nor, to swear by creatures either, without the like cause; since, in swearing by them, we swear by God, their Creator, whose attributes they reflect, whose creatures they are, and who is intimately connected with them. "*Heaven is the throne of God, the earth His footstool*." These words contain an allusion to Isaiah (lxvi. 3), and are understood figuratively in accommodation to human ideas. These words mean, that the majesty and immensity of God are resplendent in them.

"*City of the great king*," are allusive to Psa. xlvii., "*Mount Sion, founded on the sides of the north, the city of the great king*." From the city where God resides, and is specially worshipped, chosen preferably to all others, His Majesty is resplendently reflected.

36. "*By thy head*," &c. The mention of heaven and earth, &c., as specially belonging to God, suggests to our Redeemer, to prevent swearing by our head, as if our head belonged to ourselves, so that we might dispose of it, as we thought proper. He meets this insinuation by saying that, although given for our use, it is not ours exclusively; we neither created it, nor can we change its condition. "*Thou canst not make one hair white or black*." It belongs to God, as do all the other members of our body, of which the head was the principal. This form of oath, "*by the head*," was common among the Greeks and Romans, from whom, in their intercourse with them, the Jews probably borrowed it.

37. "*Let your speech be yea, yea*," &c. The meaning is, when you assert any thing, content yourselves with mere simple affirmation of its truth; when you deny

anything to be true, confine yourself to mere denial, without having recourse to swearing, to corroborate what you assert or deny. These particles are doubled, to express the certain truth of what is asserted or denied.

"And that which is over and above these," for the greater confirmation of what we say, viz., an oath, "*is of evil.*" By "*evil,*" some interpreters (Maldonatus, &c.) understand the *evil one*, or the devil. The Greek, τοῦ πονηροῦ, *the evil*, would render this opinion probable; and according to it, our Redeemer would institute an opposition between Himself, or rather between His precepts, "*I say to you,*" &c., and the suggestions of the devil. I command one thing, viz., to abstain from all oaths, in the sense already assigned. The devil suggests to you to employ oaths in the same sense, viz., unnecessarily and frivolously. The devil may be said to be not so much the suggester, as the occasional cause of all oaths, inasmuch as he was the first source of sin; and the necessity for having recourse to oaths in any circumstances, arises from sin. This latter sense, although, according to it, "*from evil,*" is referred to the devil, hardly much differs, in substance, from the interpretation, which understands "*from evil,*" not to refer directly to the devil, but to the wickedness and duplicity of man, his inconstancy and weakness, arising from the evil principle of sin, implanted in his nature, in its present fallen condition. Our Redeemer does not say, that what is beyond mere assertion or negation is in itself evil; but only that its necessity and existence are derived *from evil*, as already explained.

Our Redeemer's prohibition here of swearing would seem to be founded on three reasons—1st. The danger of perjury, to which the habit of swearing exposes us (St. Augustine, *in hunc locum*). In Eccles. (xxiii. 9), we have, "*Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing,*" &c. 2ndly. On account of the reverence due to God's name. For, if it would be indecorous to be invoking the name of man on every trivial occasion, how much more so when there is question of the holy and adorable name of God? To this reference is made in the words, "*Nor by heaven, for it is God's throne,*" &c. 3rdly. On account of the good faith and mutual confidence which should exist among Christians. This would render swearing unnecessary; and, to it reference is made in the words, "*Let your speech be yea, yea,*" &c.

Our Redeemer does not prohibit resorting to an oath, in certain circumstances, and when vested with certain conditions, viz., "*judgment,*" with a cause or necessity; "*justice,*" when its object is just and lawful; and "*truth.*" "*Thou shalt swear as the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in justice*" (Jer. iv. 2). In such circumstances an oath is an act of homage, in recognition of God's supreme veracity. It is, however, when vested with these conditions, that it is an act of homage; and only then is it lawful.

That it is sometimes lawful to swear, is a point of Catholic faith against the Anabaptists and Wickliffe. The Apostle tells us that an oath is the termination of controversy (Heb. vi. 16). Moreover, we have the example of God swearing, "*Juravit Dominus,*" &c. (Heb. vi. 13.) The Apostle swears. So do Abraham, Moses, &c. (See Comment. St. James v. 12.)

TEXT.

38. *Ye have heard that it was said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*

39. *But I say to you, not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

40. *And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him.*

41. *And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.*

42. *Give to him who asketh of thee, and from him who would borrow of thee, turn not away.*

COMMENTARY.

38. In this verse our Redeemer corrects the false traditions and interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, respecting the precept of the Mosaic law, on the subject of retaliation for injuries inflicted, the *lex talionis*. He also perfects the law itself by substituting a species of retaliation hitherto unattended to—the retaliation of patience and forgiveness. The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) is laid down (Exod. xxi. 24; Deut. xxiv. 20). It was a just enactment, sanctioned by the usage of all the ancient peoples and nations. It had the effect of serving as an efficacious check on evil doers, whom the dread of sustaining a like injury restrained within the bounds of duty. It also served to check the vengeance of the injured party, since it did not permit him to exercise the punishment of retaliation himself, to demand “*an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*,” by private authority. It only allowed recourse to the Judges, whom it directed, or rather instructed, as to the amount of reparation they were to exact in the case of malicious injury done the members or limbs of the human body. It also had only reference to equals, because, even to curse a prince, much less to injure his person, was punishable with death among the Jews. Nor did it hold between master and slave (Exod. xxi. 26). It also admitted of a fair latitude of interpretation, and the party aggrieved might, either before or after the sentence of the judge, accept of pecuniary compensation. The law of Moses strictly prohibited feelings or dispositions of a revengeful character (Lev. xix. 18).

39. “*But, I say to you*,” &c. As the *lex talionis* did not authorize private revenge, any more than does the New Law; as, moreover, it only regarded the Judges, from whom the injured party might seek just reparation, a thing equally permitted in the New Law, for the occupant of power carries the sword to restrain evil-doers (Rom. xiii.)—nor are men prevented from having recourse to them for redress, should every other means fail,—it may fairly be asked, what then, does our Redeemer enact here, that did not exist already, “*But I say to you?*” &c. As regards the law itself, on this subject, it does not appear that our Redeemer adds anything. He only perfects and corrects it, viewed according to the false interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, it would seem, explained the law, as if it allowed individuals to retaliate, and to demand, of their own private authority, the reparation which the law allowed only after the sentence of the judge. This was evidently unlawful, as it would foster a spirit of vengeance, and would tend to great injustice. In this sense, our Redeemer tells us, “*not to resist evil*.” “*Evil*” may refer to the injury sustained, or the person unjustly inflicting it; if the former, the words mean, we should not retaliate for the injury; if the latter, we should not seek to take revenge on him. Our Redeemer goes farther, and proposes a Christian kind of retaliation, both as regards personal honour, property, or personal injury (39-41).

“*Strike thee on the right cheek*,” i.e., if a man strike you on one cheek, turn to him the other also, as St. Luke expresses it (vi. 29). The form employed by our Lord shows He is speaking of private injury and satisfaction, “*strike thee*,” &c., but not of satisfaction to be exacted, on public grounds, or from the public authorities. The words of this and the following verses are, in certain circumstances, preceptive; in others, only matters of counsel; and sometimes, even inexpedient. They are preceptive in this sense, that we should never, even on public grounds, seek due satisfaction from a spirit of private vengeance, and that we should actually submit to the evils referred to, rather than avenge them from a private spirit of anger; and,

moreover, we should be prepared in our minds to bear these injuries whenever the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbour demand it. But these circumstances do not always concur, and the instructions conveyed, in affirmative propositions, like the present, are not, therefore, always preceptive. St. Augustine (hic. and Ep. 5, ad Marcellinum et Lib. de Mendacio, c. 15), understands the precept, conveyed here, of *the preparation of the mind, rather than of observance in act*. That they are not always to be observed and practised in act, is clear from the example of our Divine Redeemer Himself, who, though often patiently submitting to personal injuries and insulting treatment, of the description referred to here (Isa. l. 6), still, at times refused doing so; *v.g.*, He did not give His other cheek on the occasion, when He was struck by the servant of the High Priest; He rather reprov'd His striker (John xviii. 22, 23); from the example of St. Paul, who, though often beaten with stripes (1 Cor. iv. 11, 12), still, when sentenced to be struck before the High Priest, did not gently put up with it, "*percutiat te Dominus, paries deulbete*," &c., was his reply to the iniquitous judge. He had, at the same time, a heart prepared to suffer for the truth and for God's sake. Circumstances sometimes occur in which the patient endurance of evils and reproaches would only have the effect of exciting our aggressors the more. In this case, it would be imprudent to do so. Hence, we are told "to answer a fool according to his folly, lest he imagine himself to be wise" (Prov. xxvi. 5). Sometimes, it would only serve to let loose and embolden a whole herd of malefactors, whose only aim would be to subvert the altar and the throne. In such a case, forbearance would be opposed to the good order of society, and would, therefore, be utterly inexpedient.

40. "*And if a man will contend with thee*," &c., *i.e.*, if any man wishes to drag you unjustly before a court of justice for the purpose of depriving you of one of your garments; or, if he wishes to dispute with you in court for your coat, which he has unjustly taken away from you (the words, "*contend in judgment*," and "*take away thy coat*," may bear either meaning), then, sooner than violate charity, or suffer the loss of a greater good, *viz.*, patience and peace of soul, be prepared to make over to him your cloak also. In St. Luke (vi. 29), the order is different, "*and him that taketh away from thee thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also*." This is the more natural construction; as the cloak, which is the outer garment, is taken off first. The sense is the same in both constructions, the meaning being, if he take away one garment, be prepared to give him the other. The words of St. Luke may mean, if he take away the cheaper garment, give him the more costly one. According to St. Matthew, if he take away the inner, give him the outer, or more necessary garment. How far this is preceptive, and, in what circumstances, it is only of counsel, and when even inexpedient, may be gathered from the foregoing.

41. "*And whosoever will force thee*" (ἀγγαρεύσει). In the original term for "*force*" (*angariaverit*), which is a word of Persian origin (*angar*, in Persic, means a *courier*), is conveyed an allusion to the Persian custom of employing in the public service couriers, termed in the Persian language, *angari*, who, stationed at certain distances from one another, transmitted the public intelligence; they were in some respects, like our postmen. These public *couriers*, or king's messengers, had authority to press men, or horses, or ships, into their service. The same custom was afterwards adopted among the Romans, in regard to their provincials, and is still in use among the Turks. This exotic Greek term (ἀγγαρος) is found in St. Matthew xxvii. 32; also, Mark xv. 21. The words mean; should you be forced on an errand for a

certain distance, rather than resist and forfeit peace of mind, go voluntarily double the distance. How far this is obligatory, may be inferred from the foregoing. In the Greek, for "*go other two*," it is, "*go two*," as if to convey; instead of going one mile when pressed in the public service to that extent, go voluntarily double the required distance.

42. "*Give to him*," &c. In the foregoing maxims, our Redeemer shows we should have the dispositions of not retaliating injuriously on those who injure and act violently towards us. In this verse, He points out our obligation to exercise acts of benevolence and liberality towards our afflicted and indigent brethren, be they friends or be they foes, the sole consideration to be attended to being, their wants and necessities. Hence, in place of the law of retaliation and vengeance, our Lord substitutes the law of charity and beneficence. Wherefore, "*give to him that asketh of thee*," whoever he be, friend or foe, even if he be of those who may have "*struck thee on thy right cheek*" (v. 39); and should he wish to borrow of thee, even though he may have maltreated thee, do not, on this account, turn away thy face indignantly from him; but, lend to him, just as if he inflicted no injury whatever on thee. The words, "*would borrow*," *i.e.*, wishes to borrow, and from feelings of shame or modesty, may not actually prefer his request, convey that we are not to turn away in disgust from such persons, even though they may not actually apply to us; but rather attend to their wants.

St. Luke (vi. 30), to this, adds another precept, "*and of him who taketh away thy goods, ask them not again*," which shows that our Redeemer is speaking of those who did us an injury. This and the preceding are preceptive whenever our neighbour is either in *extreme* necessity, or reduced to such *grievous* necessity, as would call upon us to relieve his wants. Outside this state of things, they are only a matter of *counsel*; and circumstances may arise where their observance would be inexpedient, and not in accordance with the dictates of prudence. In other words, the above instructions may be said to be preceptive in this sense, that we are bound to have the prompt dispositions of relieving our neighbour's wants, as often as it is in accordance with right reason that we should do so, *i.e.*, whenever the glory of God and our neighbour's salvation require it. But if it should happen that their observance would be opposed to right reason and the good of society, which, in certain conceivable circumstances, might occur; then, in such circumstances, our Redeemer never meant that they should be observed.

St. Luke (vi. 31), adds, "*and as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner*," which is also found (c. vii. 12) of this Gospel. This shows that the above instructions are to be attended to only when our neighbour could reasonably expect similar treatment from us. Our conduct towards him and our wishes in regard to the treatment he would show us, are always to be in accordance with the dictates of prudence and right reason.

TEXT.

43. *You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy.*

44. *But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you:*

45. *That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust.*

46. *For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this?*

47. *And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this?*

48. *Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.*

COMMENTARY.

43. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour*," &c. The first part of this verse, regarding the love of our neighbour, is found in Leviticus (xix. 18). The Hebrew word for *neighbour*, *Reagh*, also signifies "*friend*;" and hence, it is rendered by St. Jerome, in the above passage, "*thou shalt love thy friend: diliges amicum tuum.*"

"*And hate thy enemy.*" These latter words are found in no part of the Old Testament, and hence, our Lord says, "*you have heard*," *i.e.*, from the false glosses and interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, finding it laid down in the law, "*thou shalt love thy friend*," by a false interpretation and contrary induction inferred, "*therefore, thou shalt hate thy enemy.*" But, this is found nowhere in Scripture. For, although the Jews are ordered to put to death, and extirpate the Chanaanite nations, nowhere are they told to hate them, any more than an executioner, who carries out the sentence of death, or the soldier ordered to slay his enemies, is told to hate them. On the contrary, the Jews are commanded in several passages of the books of Moses, to show kindness, and to practise benevolence towards their enemies. The Hebrew word, *Reagh*, signified "*friend*"—those connected with us by blood or kindred, and also all those with whom we have any relations whatever, including the known relations of necessity under which he may labour. The Scribes and Pharisees took the word in its limited sense, confining it to the Jews, the seed of Abraham, and drew a false inference, as if all, not of the seed of Abraham, *i.e.*, all the Gentiles, were to be hated. Our Divine Redeemer, taking the word in its full, universal, and extended sense, corrects the false and contracted interpretation given the word by the Pharisees, as well as their false induction, and explains the precept as obligatory, in its most extended sense, so as to include our enemies, who are joined to us not alone in the relation of common origin from the same original stock in the *first* Adam, and redemption through the *second*; but also in the relation of spiritual necessities, which the very fact of being our enemies, and their injuring us, implies.

44. "*But I say to you.*" "*I*," who am your Master, and your Sovereign Lord. "*I*," who cannot lead you astray, as I am the infallible truth, incapable of deceiving you or being myself deceived. Interpreters remark, as has been noticed in the preceding verse, that our Redeemer does not say, "*IT HAS BEEN SAID to them of old*," or it has been enjoined on your fathers; but, "*you HAVE HEARD that it was said*," as if He meant to correct not what was really said, but what they heard was said—that is to say, to correct the false glosses and interpretations of their teachers—the Scribes and Pharisees. "*I say to you.*" I command you "*to love your enemies*," which expresses the interior and sincere feelings of the heart. Far from entertaining feelings of hatred, they should, on the contrary, have feelings of love and affection for their enemies, who—as appears from our Lord's own teaching, and the illustration (Luke x.), where He gives the parable of the good Samaritan, the enemy of the Jew—are also our neighbours, whom we are bound to love, as we would reasonably hope to be loved ourselves, and this is not merely to be confined to the heart; it should be exhibited "*in work and truth.*" "*Do good to them that hate you*," refers to charity towards our neighbour, exhibited in work; "*and pray for them that persecute*

you," refers to the tongue, or the expression of charity by the tongue or by words. Hardly is there any violation of charity so common, and withal so little scrupled, as that committed by words and by the wicked tongue. This "*world of iniquity*" (James iii. 6). "*If any man think himself religious, not bridling his tongue . . . this man's religion is vain*" (James i. 26). "*Detract not one another,*" &c. (James iv. 11.—See commentary on).

In the Greek, the phrase, "*bless them that curse you,*" is added and inserted between "*do good to them that hate you,*" and "*pray for them that persecute,*" &c. The order of this latter member also is inverted in the Greek, which runs thus, "*pray for them that calumniate and persecute you.*"

The precept conveyed in this verse obliges us, *per se*, only to show our enemy the common marks of friendship and charity. To exclude him from the common offices of friendship would be a grave violation of this precept. To exhibit special marks of friendship to him if he be not in *extreme* or *grievous* want, saluting him by name, familiarly accosting him, &c., is only a matter of *counsel*. I said, *per se*, because there may be special grounds of obligation to show him *peculiar marks* of friendship in certain circumstances, *v.g.*, if scandal arose from the omission, or the salvation of our enemy required it, &c. (See c. xviii. 23, &c.)

45. Our Redeemer commends the observance of the precept of loving our enemies, from which corrupt nature so strongly recoils, and which grace alone could enable us to fulfil, by a two-fold consideration of the most pressing nature. The *first* is, that by loving our *enemies*, we demonstrate that we are, by imitation, sons, or faithful imitators of our Heavenly Father, whose sons we are already become by grace and adoption, and give proof that we are deserving to be reckoned among His children, when, by our actions, we faithfully reflect His boundless beneficence. Without distinguishing between His friends or His enemies, between "*the just and the unjust,*" between "*the good and the bad,*" He diffuses His blessings alike on all, without distinction. He bestows the priceless blessings of rain and heat on all without distinction, which are the great sources of the temporal blessings which we enjoy.

46. The *second* consideration, to influence them to love their enemies, is that, if they act otherwise, they are entitled to no supernatural reward. They do no more than the "*publican,*" whom they despise, whose unjust course of life they detest and abhor; and whom they universally regard as placed outside the pale of salvation. If, then, the former motive should be regarded by them as too exalted, as exceeding their strength or aspirations, *viz.*, that of becoming like to God; the latter could not by any means, as, they surely must aspire to a higher course of life, of virtuous actions, and to more exalted rewards, than "*the publican*" could pretend to or expect.

"*The publicans*" were the collectors of the taxes among the Jews—a class of heartless oppressors, everywhere throughout the Gospel regarded, by our Redeemer, as outside the pale of salvation.

"*If you love those (only) that love you.*" Our Redeemer speaks of exclusively loving those that love us. For, to love our friends from good motives, is praiseworthy, and deserving of reward. It has charity for its principle. Our Lord speaks of that exclusive love of our friends, as in next verse He speaks of "*saluting our brethren only.*" "*What reward shall you have?*" He, of course, speaks of supernatural rewards hereafter, as in returning the love of our friends, there is some earthly reward here, with a continuance of reciprocal love. Hence, He speaks of the reward in store in heaven hereafter, of which, by exclusively loving their friends—thus showing that

their love is purely natural—they will show themselves no more deserving than the publicans do, who exercise natural love towards their friends. “*Shall you have?*” In the Greek, it is present, “*have you,*” which means, laid up for you in heaven, and thus the meaning of the present and future reading of the verb, as in the Vulgate, amount to the same.

47. “*Salute,*” the Greek word, *ασπασθη*, denotes the mode of salutation among friends, practised among the ancients, both Jews, and Gentiles, by embraces. It was observed also among the early Christians, “*Salutate invicem in osculo sancto*” (2 Cor. xiii. 12). It denotes all other modes of expressing friendly feelings.

“*Your brethren only,*” i.e., those united to us by ties of blood or kindred. The Jews regarded the whole Jewish race, the whole seed of Abraham, as “*brethren.*”

“*What do you do more?*” “*More,*” may mean, more than those do whose actions have no supernatural merit; like the Pagans referred to, or, “*more,*” *περισσον*, may mean, *excellent, deserving of commendation.*

“*Heathens,*” as well as you, show peculiar marks of friendship and affection to their friends. Christians must surely aspire to higher merits and reward than Pagans are entitled to, who, although capable of supernatural acts under the influence of Divine grace, still are incapable of supernatural merit, since faith, although not absolutely, the *first grace*—for, Pagans receive many actual graces—still, it is the *first grace in the order of justification.* The love confined to friends exclusively, without extending to our enemies, is but Pagan love, which is, by no means, meritorious before God.

For “*Pagans,*” the common Greek reading has “*Publicans.*” But, the Vulgate is supported by the Vatican, and other MSS., and the Fathers generally.

48. “*Be you, therefore, perfect,*” &c. “*You,*” who are children of God by grace and adoption; and who must far exceed Pagans and Publicans in the practice of virtue. “*Therefore,*” on account of your Christian position and relations to God, as sons, “*made partakers of the Divine nature*” by grace and faith. “*Perfect,*” St. Luke has (c. vi.), “*merciful,*” which embraces not only the exercise of mercy towards the unfortunate and miserable; but, also, beneficence and benevolence towards all, a signification which the word, mercy, often bears in SS. Scripture (Gen. xxxix. 21, &c.), and is well suited to express the meaning of “*perfect*” here, which generally refers to the observance of God’s commandments, as explained in the preceding chapter, and, in a special way, to the exercise of beneficence to all mankind, our enemies included; and, in this twofold sense of the word, “*perfect,*” the particle, “*therefore,*” expresses a *general conclusion*, drawn from the foregoing chapter, and a *particular conclusion*, derived from what immediately precedes, regarding the love of our enemies.

“*As your heavenly Father is perfect.*” “*As,*” expresses only similitude, a resemblance, but not equality, by any means; as there can be no equality between the *finite* and the *Infinite*. God is *Infinite* in all perfections; man can only, in a limited degree, imitate and resemble Him in the practice of perfection. The “*perfection*” referred to here, while embracing the exercise of all virtues, refers, in a special degree, to the exercise of mercy, beneficence, and benevolence towards all mankind, as is expressed by St. Luke (vi. 36), “*as your heavenly Father is merciful.*” The word, “*merciful,*” is taken in its most extended sense, to embrace the exercise of beneficence to all the world. The Greek for “*Be you,*” is future, “*you shall be;*” but this is a gentle form, of conveying a precept, common to the Greek with other languages. These words are partly preceptive and of obligation; partly, of counsel. It is

preceptive on all Christians to strive to acquire the perfection necessary for their state, so far as the precepts of God bearing on that state, and the duties of their state, are concerned. Hence, it is preceptive, so far as the observance of God's commandments in general are concerned. It is preceptive also on us, as regards the love of our enemies, and the showing of benevolence to them, to show them the common marks of friendship, and if they be in *extreme* or *grievous* want, to come to their relief; and to show special marks of friendship and affection, whenever God's glory or our neighbour's salvation would be injured by our withholding them. Outside these cases, it is only of *counsel*, to show special marks of friendship to our enemies; or, taking the text in a more extended sense, to do more than observe God's commandments.

CHAPTER VI.

ANALYSIS.

Having pointed out in the preceding chapter, the works of justice we are obliged to perform, our Lord commences this chapter with pointing out *how* they are to be performed, and the motives from which they should proceed. He inculcates the necessity of avoiding vain glory in the performance of our good works in general (1). Descending to particulars, He reduces our good works to the general heads of alms-deeds, prayer, fasting. He first points out how alms-deeds are to be performed, viz., in private, in order to secure an eternal reward (2-4). Next, point out how we should discharge the duty of prayer, the faults we are to avoid, common among the Pharisees (5), and among the Pagans (7-8): the secrecy with which we should perform the duty of private prayer (6). He next teaches us that most excellent and most comprehensive form of prayer, called the Lord's Prayer (9-13), and He points out the necessity of forgiving injuries referred to in one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer (14-15). He next points out the faults committed by hypocrites in the exercise of fasting, and shows how we ought to appear, while fasting (16-18). He next inculcates detachment from earthly goods, and dissuades us from amassing earthly goods, on several grounds, because of their fleeting character and insecure tenure, as contrasted with heavenly goods (19-20); because, they engross all our thoughts, and withdraw us from heavenly things (21); because, they destroy the merit of our good actions, and withdraw us from God (22-23); because, they make us slaves of that wealth which we worship and idolize (24). He, next, by way of meeting a tacit objection, which might be made to His teaching on the subject of indifference and detachment in regard to earthly treasures, on the ground of the necessity of making provision for the future, shows on several grounds, the folly of too much anxiety on this head: first, because of the goodness of God manifested in the past provision made for us (25); again, from a comparison of the care He takes of the worthless birds of the air (26); again, on the grounds of the utter uselessness of such inordinate solicitude (27). Again, referring to the subject of raiment, so necessary for our subsistence, He suppresses inordinate solicitude on this head, from a consideration of what God has done to clothe with beauty the very grass of the field (28-31). Finally, from the consideration that such solicitude is Pagan in its tendency (32). He concludes with exhorting to make God's kingdom and His justice the chief object of our solicitude, and not inordinately forecast future troubles, which will all be provided for by God's providence, in their own good time (33-34).

TEXT.

TAKE heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven.

2. Therefore when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.

3. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth.

4. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.

5. And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.

6. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.

7. *And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard.*

8. *Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask him.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Take heed*," &c. Our Redeemer, having fully shown, in the preceding chapter, how far our "*justice*," i.e., our observance of the moral law should excel that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and having also pointed out their violation of the law, both in their teaching and their actions, commences this chapter by showing how far we should excel them as to the motives which should actuate us in the performance of the precepts of the law, common to His followers and the Jews.

The words, "*take heed*," convey, that we should employ the utmost vigilance and caution in guarding against vain glory, as the most dangerous, insidious, and subtle of all our spiritual enemies, since it destroys all the merit of our good works. It is the evil which those particularly are most liable to, who lead a life of virtue, and against which, therefore, they should be chiefly on their guard. Other passions domineer over the wicked; this, chiefly attacks those who lead a life of virtue. The opinion which some expositors put forward, viz., that this portion of the discourse, which embraces quite a different subject from the foregoing, was not a continuation of the preceding, which they say, was delivered to the Apostles on the mountain; this, to the multitude in the plain, is fully answered (c. v. 1). For, one and the same speaker, in the same discourse, and before the same audience, may, and frequently does, employ different subjects, and treat them differently, in accommodation to the wants of his audience, or of several portions of his audience.

"*Justice*," means our good works in general, by which we are made just, and the law is fulfilled; or, our observance of the law of God, without reference to any particular class of works. These are called "*justice*," because by them we are justified (c. v. 20). In the Greek, for "*justice*," it is "*alms-deeds*," which is also the reading of St. Chrysostom. The Vulgate reading, "*justice*," is supported by the Vatican and other MSS., St. Augustine, Jerome, &c. However, there is practically but very little difference as regards the meaning, since "*alms-deeds*" signifies works of *justice*, which the rich owe the poor and necessitous. Alms are styled "*justice*" (Psa. cxi. 9; Prov. x. 2; 2 Cor. ix. 10). The general signification conveyed by the Vulgate reading, "*justice*," would seem to be the more appropriate; so that from *general*, our Redeemer would proceed to *particular* virtues, which He specifies in detail. He supposes that all the duties of religion are comprised under the three following works, and may be classed under them: *Prayer* comprises, in a general way, our duties to God, and His worship; "*alms-deeds*," those we owe our neighbour; and *fasting*, those we owe ourselves, as the means of advancing our own personal sanctification. And, in order to impress upon us more clearly how these works are to be performed, our Redeemer shows first, *how* the Scribes and Pharisees performed them, and the corrupt motives by which they were actuated; and *next*, how we should perform them, and the purity of intention with which we should perform these works—our observance of God's law.

"*To be seen by them*," expresses the *end* or intention we have in view in performing our actions. We should not propose to ourselves, for end in our good works, to be seen by men. This is not opposed to c. v. 16, since our Redeemer does not prohibit us here to perform our actions before men, any more than the words of St. Paul (Gal. i. 10; 1 Cor. x. 33) do. He here refers to the *motive* or *end* we have in view in thus

performing our good works in public, viz., vain glory—"to be seen by them." In chapter v. we are told to perform our good works in such a way as to have the glory of them referred to God; "*that they may see*," not you, but "*your good works, and glorify your Father*," &c. Here, we are prevented from performing them so as to have the glory taken from God and given to ourselves—"to be seen;" not you, but your good works, "*by them*." In chapter v. there is question of "*seeing the works*," and glorifying their author; here, there is question of seeing the *men*, and glorifying them instead of God. St. Gregory admirably reconciles both passages thus: *Sit opus in publico quatenus intentio maneat in occulto*," &c. No doubt, works done in public and seen by men shall obtain a reward, "*sic luceat lux vestra ut videant opera vestra*," &c., but not works done for the end or intention, that the workers may be seen by men, and out of motives of vain glory. Similar is the mode of reconciling the passage of St. Paul above quoted. St. Paul did not please men, because his *object* was to please God, while he became all to all.

"*You will not have a reward from your Father*," &c., shows that the merit of such works is lost. Performed from earthly motives, they must be content with an earthly reward. They are not done for God, and, therefore, not entitled to any reward from Him.

"*Who is in heaven*," shows the reward of good works, referred to God, to be heavenly, divine, and eternal; while that of works done to obtain human applause is earthly, human, and transitory.

"*You shall not have*." The Greek is in the present tense, "*you have not*." The meaning comes to be the same, "*you have not*" treasured up for yourselves hereafter in heaven. Our Lord does not say, "*you shall be damned*," because it may frequently happen, that the desire of human applause for doing a good work may not be deserving of damnation. It may be only venial; and, moreover, the loss of a good work is only the loss of a reward to be given by God.

2. Having alluded to our good works in general, and cautioned us against vain glory in their performance, He now descends to particulars. (The three kinds of works, *alms-deeds, prayer, fasting*, summarily contain the whole of our religious duties.) He shows *how* they are *not* to be done, and next, *how* they *should* be done, or the motives which should actuate us, in doing them.

"*Therefore, when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee*." Some expositors say there is allusion here to a custom among the Jews, of employing a trumpet to call the poor together on the occasion of the distribution of alms, to mark the time and place for such distribution. This was a laudable proceeding, as it served to bring together all who were in want, and no deserving object would be excluded. But the Pharisees abused this custom, for purposes of display and vain glory, "*that they may be honoured by men*;" and it is this corrupt intention our Redeemer censures here. Others say there is no vestige of any such custom existing for such purposes among the ancients, and understand the words metaphorically, so as to convey that they should not ostentatiously proclaim their deeds of charity, as if they sounded them forth with a trumpet, and thus called public attention to them. The people used generally be called together, on public occasions, by the sound of a trumpet, and, probably, special allusion is made to the mode of calling people together to view theatrical performances. The sound of a trumpet preceded the actor when he came forward; and these men were but actors. "*Hypocrite*" means, literally, a theatrical performer, a stage actor, who acts a part different from the reality, and sustains a character different from what he really is. So these wicked dissemblers, here

denounced by our Redeemer, act the part of holy men, and put on the external mask of sanctity, to which they have no claim whatever in reality. Instead of being really beneficent and charitable, they were only self-seekers, looking for the praises of men.

"*In the synagogues,*" probably includes, as well places for prayers, as all public meeting places where alms were distributed, and "*streets,*" both words refer to the most public places of resort.

"*That they may be honoured by men.*" It is not the doing of good works in public that our Redeemer here condemns, but the corrupt motives of catching after the applause of men, which dictated them.

"*Amen.*" In truth, "*I say to you, they have received their reward,*" i.e., human applause, "*THEIR reward.*" "*Their,*" the only reward they looked for; "*their,*" the only reward suited to them; but they need not expect the reward from God to which their good works would be otherwise entitled, and which they would most certainly receive, if they worked for God. The Greek for "*have received*" (απεχουσι) is "*receive,*" expressing what is customary and usually happens.

3. This means, that, while bestowing alms or doing works of charity, we should carefully avoid all ostentation, and seek privacy, to such an extent, that if it were possible for our "*left hand*" to have eyes, so as to see, it would not see or be aware of the deeds of beneficence and charity performed by "*our right hand;*" in a word, that it should be so secret, as to escape even our own observation. It is the strongest language of figurative exaggeration. The words of this verse may be regarded either in the light of a precept, or, of an admonition. In the former sense, they refer to our *intention* in performing good actions, as is explained in verse 1. In the latter sense, they merely convey an admonition, that, from a consciousness of our great infirmity, and the corrupt tendency of our nature, to seek human applause in our actions, we should endeavour to perform works of charity, with the utmost privacy, unless when motives of edification may demand it otherwise.

4. "*Who seeth in secret.*" Nothing can escape His ever-watchful eye. To Him light and darkness are all alike.

"*Will repay thee.*" The Greek adds "*in public,*" a very appropriate mode of recompensing those who avoid all human applause in the performance of their good actions. St. Luke (xiv. 14), treating of a similar subject, has, "*at the resurrection of the just.*" Christ, the just Judge, will, on the Day of Judgment, "*when He will reveal the hidden things of darkness,*" publicly set forth, before the assembled nations of the earth, the private good works of His faithful servants. How foolish, then, are they who "*love vanity and seek after lies;*" who run after the empty praise of this world, which, like the passing wind, shall be utterly unheeded; instead of seeking, in every thing, the goodwill and pleasure of their bountiful Father, who will not fail to repay us, if we labour for Him, with the solid and imperishable goods of heaven.

5. Our Redeemer next treats of another portion of our religious duties, viz., prayer; and He points out the faults to be avoided, in the performance of this duty, and the mode of performing it properly.

"*When you pray,*" &c. In Greek, it is the singular form, "*When thou prayest,*" &c. "*That love* (in Greek, *because they love*) *to stand and pray in the synagogues,*" &c. They stood thus, either for the purpose of being seen, or, to seem motionless, and altogether absorbed in prayer and union with God, and thus secure human applause. On certain occasions of public prayer, viz., of sacrifice, or singing psalms, or public

benediction, or solemn thanksgiving, it was usual with both priests and people to remain in a standing posture, but the posture generally observed was that of kneeling, particularly on occasions of adoration or penance. We see Solomon did so (3 Kings viii. 54); Daniel (vi. 10); Micheas (vi. 6). In truth, kneeling was the posture generally observed, and commonly in use amongst all nations, when addressing the Supreme Deity (A. Lapide); while it would seem, from several parts of SS. Scripture, that among the Jews, in *public* devotions, the attitude varied from *standing* to kneeling (3 Kings viii. 15, 54; 1 Esdras ix. 5; Daniel vi. 10; 2 Paralip. vi. 13). It would also seem, that, in *private* devotions, some form of kneeling was the most usual posture (see Kitto's Cyclopædia, word, *attitudes*). From the very beginning, the Christian custom was to kneel at prayer—except on certain occasions, at the pasch and solemn thanksgiving—after the example of our Lord (Matt. xxvi. 39); of St. Peter (Acts ix. 40); St. Paul (Acts xx. 36). Our Lord here, speaks of *private* devotions; and hence, He speaks of their “*standing*,” manifestly to be seen, and thus gain popular applause.

“*Corners of the streets*,” is generally understood of the intersection of the public thoroughfares, where there is generally the greatest concourse of people. Others understand the words, of the private recesses of the streets, where, however, the people could see them, and give them credit, not alone for praying, but also for doing so privately, and the Pharisees did so, affecting humility, while it was all dictated by feelings of vain glory.

6. “*But thou, when thou shalt pray*,” &c. This shows that our Redeemer is referring, in the foregoing, to private prayers, practised by each individual, apart. “*Enter into thy chamber*.” St. Augustine (*in hunc locum*) understands the word metaphorically, of the closet of one's heart. St. Jerome, too, approves of the metaphorical interpretation of the word; but by the “*door when shut*,” he understands having one's lips closed, after the example of Anna, the mother of Samuel. (1 Kings i.) It is more probable, however, that our Redeemer meant the word in its literal signification, of a material chamber, as opposed to the “*synagogues and corners of the streets*,” and not only should one enter into a private chamber, but, he should also, “*have the door shut*,” in order the more diligently to avoid being seen, and escape all temptations to vain glory, in so sacred an action. What our Lord principally intends to enjoin on us here, is, that in discharging the duty of prayer, we should avoid, as much as possible, everything calculated to generate feelings of vain glory, and to secure human applause, so that, in our public prayers, which sometimes are a matter of precept, we should attend to God alone, as if no one else saw us, and as if we were shut up in our private closet, unobserved by human eye, seen only by the Searcher of hearts, and the just Judge of all; and in our private prayers, we should avoid all boasting, otherwise we would be, in the sight of God, imitating the hypocrites, in the prayers which they offer up, with the view of being seen by men; when praying in public, as a matter of duty, and edification, our motives should be always in private. “*Will repay thee*,” to which is added, in the Greek, *in public* or *openly*. Our Redeemer by no means censures here the practice of public prayer, so laudably sanctioned by the common usage of both Jews and Christians (3 Kings viii. 29; Acts i. 24; vi. 6), and by the example of our Redeemer Himself, who, on festival days, went up to the temple to attend public worship; a practice, moreover, calculated to offer joint violence to heaven, and thus more effectually secure the objects of our petitions; to give God public honour; to stimulate the tepid by example of the fervent; to increase and nourish fraternal charity.

7. In the preceding, our Redeemer cautions us against a fault in prayer common with the hypocrites; in these verses, he puts us on our guard against a fault very common among the unbelieving heathens. They imagined that, in addressing supplications to their gods, they should employ a form of address, couched in an artful, rhetorical style of language, replete with vain, useless repetitions and amplifications, calculated to inform the gods of their wants, and apt to move them to lend a willing ear to their petitions, in the same way as advocates, pleading before judges, employ language calculated to move them to lend a favourable ear to their cause. The Greek word for, "*speaking not much*" (*βατλογοσητε*), literally means, *vain, foolish repetitions*, in allusion to a certain poet, named Battus, remarkable for employing such repetitions in his writings. The following words, "*they think*," &c., show, that what it is our Redeemer here chiefly censures, is the Pagan practice of employing many words, rhetorically arranged, so as to instruct and move their gods. To this, there is derisive allusion made by Elias (3 Kings xviii. 27). Our Redeemer does not here prohibit long or protracted prayers. For, He Himself, for our instruction and example, spent whole nights in prayer, "*pernoctavit in oratione.*" He also inculcated, continual, unceasing prayer. "*We ought always to pray*" (Luke xviii. 1). St. Paul (1 Thess. v. 17; Coloss. iv. 2), inculcates the same. Neither does He prohibit vocal prayer often repeated. For, He Himself prayed in this way, in His last prayer for His disciples and the believers, and also in the garden, "*Pater, si fieri potest,*" &c. He only condemns useless, babbling repetitions in prayer, rhetorically arranged with a view of instructing and moving God, by their eloquent composition. There can be no reference here, to the litanies and rosary practised in God's Church; since the repetitions contained in these, have only for object to commemorate the mysteries of redemption, which we cannot too often reflect on and express. They remind us of the deep gratitude we owe Almighty God, for all He has so lovingly done and accomplished in our regard; and they perseveringly urge our petitions for grace, on several grounds of confidence, and on titles founded on the several passages of SS. Scripture, which have relation to the loving mysteries of redemption. They are not intended to instruct God, or persuade Him, in the manner here condemned by our Redeemer. "*For*" (*i.e.*) on account of "*their much speaking.*" The Greek word for "*much speaking*," here, *πολυλογία*, which literally and strictly means, what is expressed in our version, is quite different from the Greek word corresponding with "*speaking not much.*" Both forms of expression are intended to convey the same idea, and mutually elucidate each other.

8. "*For, your Father knoweth,*" &c. These words, which are a correction of the erroneous practice of the heathens in prayer, clearly convey what that practice was. The heathen prayer was intended to inform their gods of their wants, and, by a laboured style of composition, to set their wants clearly before them, the more effectually to influence them to hear their petitions. Our Redeemer says, no such thing is needed as regards our heavenly Father, who knows our wants before we present them, and pray for their remedy; and He only waits to have our petitions addressed to Him, in a proper way, to grant our requests; since, as our bountiful "*Father,*" He is more concerned for us, than we can be for ourselves. However, He has so arranged the decrees of His providence, that He makes our praying and petitioning Him, generally speaking, as a necessary condition for bestowing His gifts. It is only on condition of, "*asking,*" that we "*shall receive,*" &c. St. Jerome informs us, that the words of our Redeemer, in this verse, gave rise to a heresy on the part of certain philosophers, who said, why pray to God, if He knows all we

need before we pray? We address Him to no purpose, who already knows what we mean. To whom the saint replies, "We are not narrators, but suppliants. It is one thing, to inform one who is ignorant, and another, to entreat one who is already aware of our wants." Non igitur narratores sumus; sed rogatores. Aliud enim est narrare ignorantibus; aliud, scientem petere. In illo, iudicium est, in illo, obsequium" (in c. 6 Matthei).

But another question arises here, which St. Augustine also proposes. If it be a reason for not having recourse to long prayers, that God knows all before we pray, would not the same reason militate against short prayers also, and the form conveyed in the following, called the Lord's prayer? It may be said that, strictly speaking, no particular form of words, either long or short, is, *per se*, necessary for the effect of our prayers with God, who, being a pure Spirit, chiefly regards the desires of our heart, without which vocal prayer is of no avail with God. However, He has Himself prescribed a brief form of prayer, to show us *what* we are to pray for, and *how*. Moreover, a short form of prayer may be useful and necessary, for exciting and increasing devotion, and should a lengthy form conduce to this end, it is so far laudable, and by no means, involved in the censure here uttered by our Redeemer. And although, as an *omniscient God*, He knows all things, before they happen, and has, therefore, a full knowledge of all our wants, and as a *sovereignly bountiful Father*, He is prepared to succour us; still, He has, for the wisest ends, so arranged the eternal decrees of His providence, that He has made it, as a necessary condition, at least generally, of granting what we want, that we should first beseech Him to grant it. In this, He has in view our good, to remind us, by the necessity of applying to Him, that all good comes from Him as its author, and that it is to Him thanks for it are, therefore, to be rendered—to make us value His gifts the more, as they are given only after earnest entreaty—to inspire us with a love of heavenly things, whereof the necessity of appealing to our Father, who is in heaven, for which we are destined, is calculated to remind us—to beget an increase of faith, hope, and charity, and accustom us to familiar intercourse with God—to inspire us with sentiments of true humility, from the consideration of our sins and ingratitude, which we expose to God in prayer. Finally, to render to God the homage of praise and thanksgiving, and humbly discharge this duty as we should.

Owing to the tendency of our minds to earthly things, it is very useful for the purpose of withdrawing us from those earthly thoughts, to employ the words of Holy Scripture, and particularly the Psalms of David, in which the several acts of homage, petition, humility, love, sorrow for sin, praise, thanksgiving, &c., are so feelingly and so eloquently expressed. The recitation of these psalms was a favourite spiritual exercise in the infant Church, and with the primitive Christians.

TEXT.

9. *Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

10. *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

11. *Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.*

12. *And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.*

13. *And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.*

14. *For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences.*

15. *But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.*

COMMENTARY.

9. "*Thus, therefore, shall you pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.*"

The Pagans pray in the manner censured in the foregoing verses. But "*you*"—the children and sons of God—should pray "*thus*," or, in the following manner. In this, our Redeemer does not enjoin on us to employ always the following form of prayer, which He Himself has divinely taught us. "*Thus*" only implies that the following prayer—the most perfect we could employ—should be the model of all our prayers, both in regard to the *manner* and arrangement, "*seeking first the kingdom of God and His justice*," and to the *matter*: since this prayer briefly comprises all that we can ask for, either in regard to soul or body; all that concerns the present visible world, or the invisible world to come. The superior excellence of this prayer, which is accommodated equally to every class of Christians, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, may be estimated, first—from the consideration of its Author—the same, to whom, now enthroned in glory, in union with the Father and the Holy Ghost, it is addressed by the entire Church. In it, we pray not alone in the *name*, but in the very words of Christ.

And this consideration may be seen in a clearer light, were we to suppose an angel from heaven to come down, and leave us a form of prayer, composed for our benefit by the whole heavenly host. With what reverence would we recite such a prayer? But, with how much greater reverence still, should we receive and recite a prayer left us, and composed, not by any created or finite intelligence, but by the eternal Son of God Himself, "*in whom the whole plenitude of the Divinity dwells corporally*" (Colos. ii. 9); "*in whom are concealed all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge*" (Colos. ii. 3); "*the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature*" (Colos. i. 15)? Secondly—its excellence may be also estimated, from its comprehensiveness and brevity, containing, in a few words, a compendium of all we can pray for. Hence, Tertullian (lib. de Oratione), and after him St. Cyprian (de Oratione), term it, "the Breviary of the Gospel."

It commences with the words, "*Our Father, who art in heaven.*" These words serve as an introduction to the prayer. They proclaim the goodness and power of God. "*Father*," which relates to the entire Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, proclaims His goodness as evidenced in all the gifts of nature, grace, and glory, which, as our bountiful "*Father*," He bestows on us. "*Who art in heaven*," proclaims His full power and dominion over all things. These latter words also serve to withdraw our thoughts and cares from the things of this world, to raise up our hearts to the contemplation of that seat of bliss, where our "*Father*" reigns supreme, whereof we are citizens, whither we are tending, and the securing of which should be the aim of all our thoughts and actions. "*If we are truly risen with Christ, we should seek the things that are above . . . mind the things that are above*" (Colos. iii.) Our Redeemer prefaces this, His own prayer, with the word, "*Father*," which is expressive of the most endearing relation between man and man, to inspire us with filial confidence the most unbounded, since we are addressing One, who is not heedless of our miseries—One, who has for us the bowels and tenderness of a parent, and "*who, although a woman should forget the son of her womb, will not forget us*" (Isaias xlix. 15); "*who, in His correction of us, treats us not as bastards, but as sons*" (Heb. xii.); who has reserved or us specially, in the New Law, the privilege from which the Jews of old were excluded—that of being warranted in addressing to Him the endearing appellation f "*Father*" (Rom. viii. 15). These words also serve to remind us of the gratitude

and love we owe the Master of heaven and earth, for deigning to become a Father to us.

"The word *"our,"* which runs through the entire prayer—"our daily bread," "our trespasses," &c.—not *"my Father,"* "my daily bread," &c.—is meant to remind all Christians, rich and poor, of every rank and condition, of the mutual charity they owe one another as children of the same common Parent, who adopted all His children in Jesus Christ; with whom, in the new spiritual existence, which all receive in Christianity, there is no exception of persons. With Him all conditions are equal; with Him, "*there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free*" (Colos. iii. 11). It is meant, therefore, to remove all grounds of haughty insolence, on the part of the rich and exalted, and of murmuring and discontent, on the part of the poor and lowly. Members of the same mystical body of Christ, all should strive for the sake of the head, Christ, to perform properly the allotted functions, as He has been pleased to arrange them, for the common advantage of the body. (1 Cor. xii.) The word *"our,"* also reminds us that in this prayer, each one addresses God, not in a mere individual capacity, but as a member of the great Christian family; and that he prays, not merely for himself, but, in a certain sense, for all Christians.

The words, "*who art in heaven,*" by no means insinuate that God does not fill all space with His glorious immensity. "*Do I not fill heaven and earth?* says the Lord," (Jer. xxiii. 24); "*If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there,*" &c. (Psa. cxxxviii.); "*in Him we live and move,*" &c. (Acts xvii.) They are merely meant to convey that, though God be everywhere, still, He is said to be in a special way "*in heaven,*" because there He is seen "*face to face,*" and manifests His glory to His angels and saints. And our Lord, in using these words, has in view the reasons above assigned.

"*Hallowed be Thy name.*" This prayer, which contains all that we can lawfully ask of God, is composed of seven distinct petitions; the first three directly and immediately regard the glory of God—"Thy name," "Thy kingdom," "Thy will"—the remaining four directly and immediately regard our spiritual and temporal welfare—"our bread," "our trespasses," &c.; and indirectly, the glory of God, which everything in creation is destined to subserve, with everything referred to it as its final end. Or, this prayer may be said to be composed of two parts, viz., a petition for blessings, and a deprecation of evil. The petition for blessings embraces four points, the first of which regards God, for whom we desire what alone can be desired for Him, viz.—that honour be rendered to Him by all—"hallowed be Thy name;" the remaining three, ourselves. We pray, first, for the greatest blessing for ourselves, viz., life eternal—"Thy kingdom come;" next, for the means of securing this, viz., the grace to fulfil God's holy will, to practise virtue, and exercise good works—"Thy will be done;" and, lastly, goods of the lowest order—"give us this day," &c. Thus, we seek first, "*the kingdom of God and His justice.*" The deprecation of evils also contains three points—first, we deprecate the greatest of all evils, sin; secondly, those of an intermediate class, the occasion of sin; thirdly, the lowest class of evils, temporal afflictions. Or, perhaps, this latter point, regarding the deprecation of evils, might be more naturally divided, not into three, as above, but into two parts. In the first, we deprecate evils of the greatest magnitude, viz., the sins we committed; in the second, present and future evils; hence, the Church, after the "*Pater Noster*" in the holy Mass, subjoins, "*libera nos ab omnibus malis præteritis, præsentibus, et futuris.*" The same order in regard to God's glory in the first instance, and our benefit in the second, is also observable in the precepts given to the human race on Sinai—those of the first Table prescribe what we owe to God; those of the second, the duties we owe our neighbour and ourselves.

"*Hallowed be Thy name.*" This first petition means, that the name of God, in itself most holy and adorable, "*sanctum et terribile nomen ejus*" (Psa. cx.), "*et sanctum nomen ejus*" (Luke i. 49), would be treated as such by us, and by all creatures; that the infinite and adorable perfections of His Divine nature would be made known to all men; since, to love, adore, and serve God, with our whole hearts, we only want to know Him. We, therefore, beg first, in this petition, that the infidels, who now profane God's holy name, upon whom never beamed a single ray of Divine revelation, who now transfer the honour due to Him to demons and senseless idols, would be brought to a knowledge of the faith. "*This is eternal life, that they may know Thee,*" &c. Secondly—That the Jews, who blaspheme Him in their synagogues, would be brought to adore this Triune God. Thirdly—We pray for the destruction of all errors and heresies opposed to God's truths; we pray that all heretics would be brought within the ark of His holy Church, within the enclosure of that one fold, outside which there is no salvation. Fourthly—That the faithful would practically show that they know and reverence God; and, above all, that those among them, who lead immoral, Pagan lives, thereby causing "*the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles,*" would be converted, and brought to perform works suited to their Christian profession, "*as the children of light, and children of the day*" (1 Thess. v. 5); that they would redeem the past, and, by their edifying lives, cause those who before, on their account, blasphemed, now, on seeing their good works, "*to glorify their Father, who is in heaven.*" Fifthly, and finally, we pray, that as the name of God is unceasingly sanctified by the angels of heaven, singing, "*Holy, Holy,*" &c., so also, all irreverent invocations of God's holy name having ceased, all men on earth would unite in loving and praising the name of God. For, the words of the third petition—"On earth as it is in heaven," should be understood as referring to each of the two preceding petitions: "*Hallowed,*" &c., "*on earth as it is in heaven;*" "*Thy kingdom,*" &c., "*on earth as it is,*" &c.

10. "*Thy kingdom come*"—the second petition. "*Kingdom*" may mean, in a general way, God's universal, supreme dominion, which He at all times exercises over all creatures, "*regnum tuum, regnum omnium sæculorum*" (Psa. cxliv.), although this is not the meaning of the word here. Secondly—In a special way, God's spiritual reign of grace, which He exercised from the beginning in the souls of some just, and, from the Incarnation, throughout all nations, who before were ruled over by the devil. In this sense, we pray for the universal reign of God by His grace in men's souls, opposed to the reign of the devil and of sin (St. Ambrose and St. Jerome interpret it thus). Thirdly—The kingdom by which He reigns over the angels and saints, whom He renders sovereignly happy in heaven (St. Cyprian). Fourthly—The most perfect, triumphant reign of His power, of His justice, and grace—the final consummation of His glory, when all His enemies, including the infernal spirits of every order, who infest the air which we inhale, whence they descend to wage their fiendish war against the extension of His glory, and the salvation of mankind, are brought to nought, and trampled under foot; and "death itself, the last enemy, shall be swallowed up in victory," and, "*God all in all,*" by the universal sway and unopposed dominion He shall exercise, in the punishment of the reprobate and the glorification of His faithful servants (St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom). This kingdom commences after the general resurrection. "*Come, ye blessed . . . possess the kingdom,*" &c. This is most likely the meaning chiefly intended here. It may also embrace the other meanings, as subordinate to it. We, then, pray, that the final reign of God's glory may arrive. And, although this shall most certainly come whether we will it or no; still, our Redeemer wishes here to remind us, that we should prepare, during our exile here

below, for that kingdom where we are to reign with God and Christ; and also, that we should so regulate our conversation, our consciences, as to look forward, with undoubting confidence, to the coming of God's kingdom, and, relying on His fatherly goodness, patiently hope to be sharers in His unspeakable bliss. The inheritance, then, which "*our Father who is in heaven*" has in store for us, is a "*kingdom*," of which we are heirs and co-heirs with His Son, Christ; infinite bliss which "*neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard*," &c.; after which the psalmist sighed—" *Woe to me that my sojourn is prolonged*" (Psa. cxix.); *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God*," &c.; and after which the apostle longed—" *I long to be dissolved*," &c., "*unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me*," &c. Also, "*we ourselves . . . are waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body*" (Rom. viii.)

Again, as an indispensable condition for the arrival of this kingdom of bliss for us, and of glory for God, we here pray for the extension throughout the world of the holy, Catholic Church, in which alone faith can ordinarily be found. The Church is frequently termed *the kingdom of God*, in SS. Scriptures; because, in it alone does He reign on earth. It alone is the threshold for entering the kingdom of glory. By this universal extension of the Church, throughout every quarter of the globe, the coming of the most perfect kingdom of God, above referred to, shall be accelerated. For, it is commonly believed, that before the Day of Judgment, the Gospel shall be preached, at least successively, through every part of the earth; that all nations shall embrace the faith, and enter the Church, the Jews not excepted, who shall then be converted—" *the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. And so all Israel should be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Sion, He that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*" (Rom. xi. 26).

"*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*"—the third petition. By "*will*" is meant the imperative will of God, embracing all His precepts, all that He wishes to be done, and to be avoided. So that we here pray, that until such time as the great manifestation of His glory, after general judgment, His most perfect reign, referred to in the preceding petition, shall take place, His reign on this earth would be as perfect as possible. This can be effected only by having His will obeyed, or all His mandates executed, which is the only means of arriving at the secure possession of His heavenly kingdom. For, "*not every one that saith, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father, who is in heaven*" (Matt. vii. 21). Hence, in this petition, we pray that all God's ordinances and commands, whether emanating directly from Himself, and revealed in SS. Scripture or tradition, or justly enacted by those whom He has vested with power, either spiritual or temporal, would be obeyed by us, and by all men, with the same promptitude, perfection, and alacrity with which they are executed by His angels in heaven ("*benedite Domino omnes Angeli ejus . . . ministri ejus, qui facitis voluntatem ejus*," Psa. cii.), and this we wish in opposition to the concupiscence of the flesh, the suggestions of the devil, and the allurements of the world, to whose will we oppose and prefer the holy will of God; and, although we know that, in this wicked world, the will of God is not to be so perfectly accomplished, still, it is the part of pious souls to desire what they know ought to be done, notwithstanding their knowledge that it will not take place. Moreover, we wish, should all disobedience to God's will not cease, that, at least, it would be less than it is, and that there would be fewer than there are to resist His holy will. But, in order that we and others, for whom we pray, and desire the fulfilment of God's commandments, may be able to do so effectually, the aid of His holy grace is necessary; since, without it, we cannot even conceive a good thought conducive to salvation. "*We are not sufficient to think from ourselves*," &c., nor utter a

good word in the proper spirit ; “ *no one can say, Lord Jesus, except in the Holy Ghost,*” nor perform a good action conducive to salvation ; “ *Without me you can do nothing.*” Hence, in this petition, we also beg for all the graces necessary for the entire and perfect fulfilment of God’s holy law and commandments, *i.e.*, necessary for His will being done.

This will of God, as explained in the foregoing, is termed by theologians, *voluntas signi*, which may not be carried out ; as it depends, in some measure, on man’s free will for its accomplishment. Strictly speaking, it cannot be called the *will of God* at all, or an internal act of the Divine mind. It is only a *sign* of it ; and is called His will, metaphorically, just as a written instrument is called a testator’s last will, being a sign of it. It can hardly be said, there is any will or desire existing in God which is not accomplished ; for, God’s will is eternal, one and the same with God Himself. Hence, it is attributed to Him, metaphorically, as anger is attributed to Him, on account of certain effects produced by Him, just as the salvation of all men is said to be willed by Him, on account of certain means provided by Him for this end. In the same way, He is metaphorically said to will certain things, on account of the mandates He gives, while at the same time “ *He leaves man in the hand of his own counsel,*” free to observe or violate them. It is, therefore, termed *voluntas signi*, on account of the external signs given by God that He wishes it to be carried out. It is rather a *signum voluntatis* than a *will* at all. These signs of God’s will are *five* in number, *viz.*, *precept*, *counsel*, *prohibition*, *operation*, *permission*. These five are usually the signs of a wish on the part of men ; and, hence, they are transferred to signify the same in God, in whom the will indicated by the above five signs is presumed to exist, although it is not always so, as in man. One, however, of the above signs, *viz.*, *operation*, is a most certain sign of God’s will, and bears towards it the assured relation of *cause and effect*. As regards this sign, the *voluntas signi* always coincides with the *voluntas beneplaciti*, as St. Thomas teaches (q. 19, Art. 12, ad 2), and it is only when the *voluntas signi* coincides with the *voluntas beneplaciti*, that it is sure to be accomplished and carried into effect.

Besides this, there is in God an absolute, efficacious will, which may be properly termed His will, called by theologians, *voluntas beneplaciti*. This is never frustrated ; it is always surely accomplished. Its certain accomplishment arises from God’s omnipotence and immutability. Even when the *voluntas signi* is frustrated through human perversity, and men violate God’s commandments, and condemn themselves to hell, this absolute will is still accomplished, which has for object, to permit certain things to happen, and certain evils of every sort to exist in this world. As far as this absolute will is concerned here, we beg of God grace, in this petition, to conform to this adorable will, in all the events of life, in all the heavenly dispositions of His providence, both in prosperity and adversity. But it is of the former will, *voluntas signi*, there is question chiefly here, as is clear from the words, “ *sicut in cælo et in terra.*”

The motives for thorough perfect conformity to God’s holy and adorable will, which is the only true, solid, lasting source of comfort and consolation in the trials and crosses and difficulties of life ; which, being founded on God, shall endure when all human considerations, all philosophical motives of worldly patience and endurance of the inevitable shall fail, are derived, principally, from the consideration of His paternal goodness. He is more concerned for us, than we are for ourselves. “ *Jaeta in Dominum curam tuam et ipse te enutriet*” (Psa. liv. 23). Also, from the consideration, that everything that happens in this world (sin excepted), whether great or small, happens by His positive will. “ *Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God*” (Ecclesiasticus xi. 14). “ *Shall there be an evil in a city which the Lord hath not done*”

Amos iii. 6). The very hairs of our head are numbered, and the sparrow falls not to the ground except by His will. Nay, what are regarded as fortuitous or accidental by men, are quite determined by God, "*who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will*" (Ephes. i.) "*Men draw the lots, but God directs the choice.*" Also, from the consideration, that if we are destined for salvation, everything that happens to us (except sin) happens for our greater good. What He does, and wherefore, we know not now; but we shall see it hereafter. As everything, then, happens by God's positive will, it is our duty, as creatures, to submit in all things to the dispensations of His adorable providence. A generous spirit of conformity to His holy will is the only permanent, solid, and enduring alleviation we can have recourse to, in all the trials of life, "*fiat voluntas tua sicut in celo,*" &c. "*As it has pleased the Lord; so, it has been done; may the name of the Lord be blessed for evermore*" (Job). One "blessed be God" in the hour of adversity, in the day of trial, is worth a thousand acts of conformity, in the sunshine of prosperity. "*Fiat, laudetur atque in eternum superaltetur jussissima, altissima, et amabilissima voluntas Dei in omnibus.*"

11. "*Give us this day our supersubstantial bread*"—fourth petition. "**SUPERSUBSTANTIAL.**" The Greek word for "*supersubstantial*" (ἐπιουσιον) is rendered "*supersubstantialis*," here by St. Jerome, derived, according to some, from the root (ουσια), which means *essence, substance*; and means, what is necessary for the daily support and sustenance of our life. Hence, St. Jerome, when correcting the Vulgate of the New Testament, by the command of Pope Damasus, according to the best Greek readings (Novum Testamentum jussu Damasi Græcæ fidei reddidit), translated the Greek word, ἐπιουσιον, *quotidianum* ("daily"), in Luke xi. 2, as it was commonly in use in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in the public offices of the Church, and the private devotions of the faithful at the time; nay, even, as we are informed by Tertullian and St. Cyprian, as early as the second and third century; "*supersubstantial*" and "*daily*," signifying the same, viz., what is necessary for our daily sustenance. Some Greek writers, Suidas, Theophylact, and St. Basil (questio. 252), render ἐπιουσιον, what is suitable or necessary for sustaining our life or substance, being added to our substance, having the same meaning as "*daily*." The Syriac version has, the bread of our *sufficiency* or *necessity*. Others derive the word from ἐπιουσια, scilicet, *ἡμερα*, "*the coming day*." But, the word, "*daily*," bears the same meaning, from whatever root we derive the Greek word.

"**BREAD,**" in Scriptural usage, frequently designates all things necessary for the sustenance of human life. (Gen. xxv. 34; 4 Kings vi.; Luke xiv.; Psal. xxxiii.; Isa. iii.) In this petition, then, while humbly acknowledging our total dependence on God's holy providence for every moment that we exist; we pray for the necessary means of sustaining and prolonging life, viz., for meat, drink, clothing, and the decencies of our state of life. All these are included in the word, "*bread*."

But it may be asked, how can the rich, who have wealth stored up for years, pray for what they already have in abundance—meat, drink, clothing, &c.? The answer is, that every one, no matter how independent in point of means, is dependent for the enjoyment of these means on the bounty of Providence. The fool in the Gospel (Luke xii. 20), had to give up his soul on the very night of the day he seemed to boast of his independence of Providence. There is no family in which death would not make a great change. The death of a parent, child, &c., would often deprive them of the necessary props of existence. In this petition, we pray for their continuance in existence. Others would be ruined by a single mistake in a commercial or mercantile transaction. We all depend on the fruits of the earth, which might be

ruined by the inclemency of the seasons, by fire, frost, hail, and the spirit of the storm, which God often employs as instruments for carrying out His designs. A sudden accident, an unforeseen conflagration, might ruin us for ever, and reduce us to a state of abject beggary. This and other accidents of the kind might make "many who lie down at night in possession of wealth, rise in the morning, as abject beggars." Hence, it is that the rich should present themselves as suppliant mendicants before the throne of the Master of all, and petition for the continuance in their families of the goods they now possess. They should petition in the words, "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" for their own continuance in existence, which might be cut short in an instant, to enjoy the goods with which God has already blessed them.

"OUR," reminds us that the petition has for object, what may be justly acquired; since no unjust acquisition can, in any sense, be termed "*ours*." We can have no claim to whatever is unjustly procured. It cannot, therefore, be called "*our bread*." Again, the term, "*our*," reminds us of our obligation of labouring for our daily subsistence, in accordance with the decree, "*Of the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread,*" which, in a certain sense, is binding on all, in every rank of life. The labour designated by "*sweat of the brow*," must vary according to circumstances, and the different conditions of life. Every one, who wishes to lead a Christian life, must labour in a way suited to his condition in life. If we eat the bread of idleness, and make the whole circle of our days, months, and years, a mere blank, a perfect void of existence—not to speak of the dangerous mood we must be always in, to be tempted and successfully assailed by the devil—we are unworthy of the very bread we consume. We are only contravening the original decree of God, repromulgated by the Apostle to the Thessalonians, "*For, when we were with you, we declared, that if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For we have heard that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now, we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that, working with silence, they should eat their own bread*" (2 Thess. iii. 10-12).

"GIVE US." It is deserving of remark, that in the different petitions of this prayer, we address God not merely on our own behalf, but also on behalf of all the members of the Church; not merely in our individual capacity, but as members of the great Christian family with whom, as members also of the same mystic body, we should be kept indissolubly united by the manifestation of mutual love.

"THIS DAY." These words are frequently employed in SS. Scripture to denote the whole term of human life. Thus understood, the words mean, "give us during the whole course of our life, the necessary means of support." It is more likely, however, that the words refer to each particular day, and that we beg for each particular day, the necessary means of support. Like children, who apply every day for the pittance assigned them, by a loving parent, we, the children of "*our Father, who is in heaven*," cast ourselves, each day, upon His providence, who feeds the ravens and clothes the lily with beauty; and, assuredly, He will not fail to make due provision for us. We are not, however, to infer from this, that we are either prevented or dispensed by this, from making a proper, prudent provision for the future. No; as a condition of God's giving an increase, we are supposed to have toiled and laboured. We are supposed to have "*planted and watered*" before expecting from God an increase. The words of this petition only convey that we should cast aside all undue solicitude for the future, which, after we do our part, would imply distrust in the arrangements of God's adorable providence.

The words of this verse, while directly and immediately referring to corporal food,

may be also understood to include (especially in the meaning attached by some to *επιουσιον*—*excellent, transcendent*) that most excellent of all foods, the adorable Body and Blood of Christ, which the Church would wish her children to receive every day—the bread of angels, which is the support of the soul; and, also, the Word of God, on which man spiritually lives; and, especially, Divine grace. The famine of this Word is the most dreadful famine with which God menaces a sinful people (Amos viii. 11).

12. "*And forgive us our debts,*" &c.—the fifth petition. In the preceding petition, we begged for all the blessings necessary for soul or body. In the three following petitions, we beg of God to avert all evils, past, present, or future, whether temporal or spiritual, that may mar our happiness here or hereafter. And, as *sin* is the greatest of all *past* evils, either as regards its guilt or consequences; hence, in this petition, we pray for the full and perfect remission of all our past sins. Although we owe God "*debts*" of many kinds—debts of gratitude, of obedience, thanksgiving, love, &c.—the "*debts*" referred to here are our sins, as St. Luke has it (xi. 4), "*forgive us our sins*;" they render us debtors to God's justice, as may be seen from parable (xviii. 27, and verse 14 of this chapter). Every mortal sin, as being an offence against a person of infinite dignity, contains infinite malice, and is, therefore, a debt of enormous magnitude. In this petition, then, while acknowledging the magnitude of the debts we owe God, and our utter inability to discharge them, we beg of Him, like the debtor in the Gospel (c. xviii.), to pardon us, which is, in other words, to beg of Him the grace to confess them as we ought, in the Sacrament of Penance, the only ordinary means appointed by Himself for their remission (John xx. 23).

"*As we forgive,*" &c. "*As,*" does not express a strict rule or measure of forgiveness sought for, so as to imply, that if we do not forgive our enemies or debtors, and refuse to pardon them from our hearts, we would be begging of God not to forgive us. It only expresses a necessary condition of our obtaining forgiveness, and is used in the sense of "*since,*" "*whereas,*" "*because,*" in which sense it is used by St. Luke (xi. 4), "*For, we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*" So that a man who harbours feelings of aversion or hostility to his neighbour, when addressing God in these words, would, *at most*, be only guilty of a lie, which is generally understood to be of merely venial guilt. He would not be praying for his own condemnation; nay, should he make an effort to resist these vindictive feelings, although he had not actually mastered them, he might, by the fervent recital of this prayer, incline God to bestow on him the grace to love and pardon his enemy; and, by changing his heart of stone into flesh, to melt him into feelings of humanity and compassion.

I said, *at most*, all that would follow is, that the vindictive man would be telling a lie to God. Many hold, that even this would not be the case; since, in offering up this prayer, each one presents it in the name, and as a member of, the Church, in which there will be always found men to pardon their enemies; and, associated with these, the vindictive man can say, in a certain sense, "*forgive us, as we forgive,*" &c.

But, our Redeemer has attached to the words in which we beg forgiveness for ourselves, these other words, "*as we forgive,*" &c., to bring always before our minds, that we can hope for forgiveness, only when we shall have forgiven our enemies, from our hearts, the private injuries done us. Hence, St. Augustine (Serm. 5, alias de diversis 48), addressing certain vindictive persons, who unable, or at least unwilling, to bring themselves to forgive their enemies, meant to omit this petition of the Lord's Prayer altogether, says: "*If you omit repeating the words, 'forgive us our trespasses,' &c., your trespasses will not be forgiven; and if you repeat them, and*

do not, as you say, *i.e.*, forgive your enemies, your sins will not be forgiven. It therefore, remains for us to say it and do it, *i.e.*, repeat the words, craving forgiveness, and comply with the condition expressed, in order that they may be forgiven."

The words of this petition by no means preclude our demanding public satisfaction and reparation, on public grounds, for injuries done us in person or property. They only prevent harbouring private feelings of vengeance and hatred. The omission to exact public satisfaction would subvert society; hence, not contemplated here.

13. "*And lead us not into temptation*"—sixth petition. "*Temptation*" is twofold: of probation, or trial; of seduction, or deceit. The first kind of temptation has for object to test our fidelity and virtue; and by showing, from an experimental knowledge of our weakness, how poor we are of ourselves, to inspire us with sentiments of true humility. Of such temptation, God is frequently said, in SS. Scripture, to be the author and direct cause. In this sense, is He said to have tempted Abraham. (Gen. xxii.); Job and the Jewish people (Deut. xiii.) In this sense, the Psalmist prays, "*try me and tempt me*" (Psa. xxv.); and St. James tells us to regard it as all joy, when we fall into divers "*temptations*." (James i.)

The second kind of temptation, *i.e.*, of *seduction*, or *deceit*, has for direct object to allure us by the promises of enjoyment, or impel us by the threats of evil and punishment, to the commission of evil, and thus to cause our spiritual ruin. Of this, God can never be the direct cause or author. It is to this St. James refers, when he says, "*Let no one say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted by God. God is not a tempter of evils; He tempts no one.*" (i. 13). It is in this sense the devil is called the *tempter*. (Matt. iv.; 1 Thess. iii.) It is of this latter kind of temptation, *i.e.*, of *seduction*, or *deceit*, there is question in this sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "*lead us not into temptation.*" Of such temptation, God cannot be the author.

But it may be asked, if God cannot be the author of such temptation, why pray to Him not to lead us into that into which He cannot lead us, viz., into temptation, with the view of compassing our spiritual ruin? By the very fact of begging of Him, "*not to lead us into temptation,*" do we not imply He would do so, unless we deprecated it? In SS. Scripture, God is frequently said to do what He merely *permits*, when the event would infallibly take place, unless He prevented it. Thus, *v.g.*, Rom. i., "*God delivered up (the haughty philosophers) to the desires of their hearts*" (v. 24); "*gave them up to shameful affections*" (v. 26); "*delivered them up to a reprobate sense*" (v. 28); although, on His part, all this was a merely *negative* act, abandoning them, withholding, in punishment of their ingratitude, His lights and graces, indispensable for their avoiding sin. So also (2 Thess. ii.), "*God shall send them the operation of error to believe a lie*;" because, by withholding His grace, men shall as infallibly yield to the suggestions of the lying spirit, as if God Himself had sent him for the purpose of deception. So is it here, "*lead us not into temptation.*" The words mean, permit us not, by the withdrawal of Thy graces and protection, to consent or yield to the temptation that now assails us, to which we would as surely yield, unsupported by God's grace and protection, as if God Himself had designed to mislead us; and no temptation, be it ever so violent, will overcome us without God's permission. According to the above interpretation, which is that of St. Augustine, we do not, in this petition, pray to be delivered from all temptation; but, not to consent to temptation, strengthened by God's grace, and invested with the panoply of Christian warfare, indicated by the Apostle. (Eph. vi.) St. Chrysostom and St. Cyprian understand the words to mean, do not allow us to be assailed by the seductive temptations of the

devil. This we would pray for, from a sense of our own great infirmities; from a feeling of humility. Perhaps, both interpretations might be united, and they would thus more fully express the meaning of the words, "do not permit us to be assailed by seductive temptations (St. Chrysostom), and permit us not to yield to the seductive temptations by which we are already assailed." The great importance of this petition may be seen from a consideration of two things; first, of our own weakness in our present fallen state, arising from blindness of intellect, strong inclination to evil in our own will—the legacy of Adam's pride, always inherent in us—secondly, of the great strength of the spiritual enemies, whom we have constantly to encounter during the whole course of our life on earth, which is a state of continual warfare. The chief of these is the devil, who is ever going about, like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us (St. Peter), who with myriads of his infernal associates, infest the air we inhale, whence they descend to wage their fiendish war against us. St. Paul calls him, "*The Prince of the Powers of this air.*" (Eph. ii.) His great strength is described by Job, "*non est potestas super terram quæ comparetur ei,*" &c. (Job xii. 24.) His great power is also clearly indicated by St. Paul (Eph. vi. 11-16. See commentary on). This powerful, cunning spirit and his associates, employ the world and the flesh as their leagued allies and auxiliaries. The charms, and fascinations, and wicked principles of the former, and the corrupt and beastly pleasures of the latter, are the arms those wicked spirits wield with efficacy; whence it comes to pass, that thousands go to hell and but the tens, to heaven. In the words, "*lead us not into temptation,*" is conveyed, that our enemies can do us no harm save by Divine permission. Hence, we should fervently pray to God, in the words of this petition, not to permit them to harm us. This permission is often given by God on account of our sins. "*Who hath given Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to robbers? Hath not the Lord Himself, against whom we have sinned?*" (Isa. xlii. 24).

From the above may be seen the importance of this *sixth* petition. Some commentators (among whom Jansenius Gandavensis) say, that in the Lord's Prayer there are only six petitions altogether; that the concluding words, "*but deliver us from evil,*" only express, in an *affirmative* form, what was *negatively* expressed in the foregoing member; and that the word, "*evil,*" conveys, that there is question in the preceding only of such temptations as are "*evil,*" and intended to lead to sin. It is, these interpreters say, because the clause expresses, in an affirmative way, what was negatively expressed in the preceding clause, it was omitted altogether by St. Luke (xi. 4). But the different clauses of such propositions do not always refer to the same thing; they often refer to quite different things. The common opinion, then, is, that there are seven petitions (St. Augustine in Enchiridio, c. 115, 116), corresponding with seven of the evangelical beatitudes, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost (*Idem* L. 2, de Sermone Domini, c. 11). In verse 12, we pray to be delivered from all sins whatsoever; in verse 13, from all temptations and dangers of committing sin; and in the words, "*but deliver us,*" &c., from all afflictions whatsoever, the consequences of sin, corporal or spiritual, temporal or eternal.

"*But, deliver us from evil. Amen.*" This is the *seventh* petition. By "*evil*" some commentators understand the devil, called "*evil,*" because he was the author of all *evil*, of all guilt and sin, "*a murderer*"—who slew the souls of men—from the beginning—"evil," too, because he is the instrument which God employs in visiting sinners with evil and punishment. In reference to this latter circumstance, it is said by the Prophet Amos: "*there is no evil in the city which the Lord had not done;*" and elsewhere, "*I am the Lord . . . making peace and creating evil.*" The devil is also called "*evil,*" because by his very nature, full of malice, he bears an

undying hatred, and entertains the deepest malignity for the human race. According to this interpretation, adopted by many of the Fathers (Tertullian, St. Chrysostom, &c.), the words mean: "but deliver us *from the power of the devil*." The construction of the sentence in verse 13, "*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*," with the adversative particle "*but*," would favour this view. It is moreover, in its favour, that the great source of temptation, the great enemy with whom we have to contend, is the devil, who employs the world and the flesh as his associates and auxiliaries; and hence, "*lead us not into temptation*" would be clearly expressed in an affirmative form in the words, "*but deliver us*," &c., the meaning of the entire sentence in such a construction being, "do not allow us to fall into temptation; but, rather deliver us from the power of the devil, the source of temptation in this life." The Greek words, ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, will bear this construction, "*from the evil one*." However, the words, even with the article, will bear a *neuter* and more extensive sense, so as to mean *evil in general*, in which sense it is used in some parts of the SS. Scripture, *e.g.* (Deut. iv. 25; Rom. xii. 9; Thess. iii. 3). So that, according to the views of the best critics, it must be determined from the context, whether the words are to be taken in a limited sense to designate *the wicked one*, or in a more extensive sense, to designate, *evil in general*.

The more common opinion, as has been already observed, is, that the word "*evil*" is taken in a *neuter* and more extensive sense, to denote the temporal evils and misfortunes of this life, and we deprecate them as possibly leading to spiritual and eternal ruin. So that, as in the preceding petitions, we begged to be freed from the guilt and eternal consequences of sin, whether past, present, or future, in this last petition we beg to be freed from the temporal consequences of sin; the condition, however, being understood, that such exemption may not prove detrimental to our souls; otherwise our prayers would be inordinate, as opposed to the great end of our creation. Indeed, the word may be taken in its most extensive sense to embrace evil of every kind, temporal and eternal. So that this petition will not be fully accomplished save in the resurrection of the dead; when "*death*" (with all the ills to which flesh is heir) "*is swallowed up in victory*." In this petition, then, we pray to be saved from water or drowning, from fire, thunder and lightning, from the injurious effects of the seasons on the fruits of the earth, from famine, seditions, rebellions, and wars. We beg of God to avert disease and pestilence, devastations, robberies, chains and imprisonment, and all the other evils whereby the life of man is rendered unhappy. We beg that the goods which mankind prize or esteem be not converted, as they sometimes are, into sources of evil and misfortune for us. We beg to be preserved from a sudden death, which is oftentimes inflicted, only as a temporal punishment for sin—in a word, we beg of God "*to preserve us*," in the language of the Church, "*from all evils past, present, and to come*." When, however God sends us temporal evils, we must receive them humbly from the hands of our loving Father who is in heaven, as fatherly chastisements. This good Father sees that temporal afflictions are sometimes useful and necessary for us; and hence, when we pray to be delivered, He will not hear us, knowing that instead of bread He would be giving us a stone; instead of a fish, He would thus be giving us a serpent. We should patiently bear temporary evils and sufferings, following in the footsteps of our great leader and captain. "It would be unseemly," says St. Bernard, "to find delicate members under a head crowned with thorns."

"*Amen*," which St. Jerome calls "signaculum Dominicæ Orationis" (Comment. hic.), is a Hebrew word retained in the Latin edition of the SS. Scripture and ecclesiastical prayers, as St. Augustine assures us (Lib. 2 de Doctrin. Christ. c. 11),

“propter sanctiorem auctoritatem” but chiefly from a feeling of reverence for our Divine Lord, who frequently used the word. Firstly, it has the force of affirmation in the beginning of a sentence, the same as the Greek, *ναί, αληθώς*. Secondly, at the end of a sentence it means “so be it,” expressive of assent to, or desire of, what precedes. When it is used in the Lord’s Prayer, in the Mass, it is not said by the people, with the words, “*sed libera nos a malo*,” but by the priest, after them, to convey to us, that God Himself, between whom and the people, the priest is mediator, ratifies what is done, and declares on His part that He has heard the petitions presented to Him by priest and people in the Lord’s Prayer; as our Lord said formerly to the Chanaanite woman, “*fiat tibi sicut vis*” (Matt. xv.); (Catechism of Council of Trent on this prayer).

In the *received* Greek text, to this prayer are added the words, “*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.*” This form of Doxology has, no doubt, the chief weight of extrinsic evidence in favour of its authenticity. It has almost all the Greek MSS., the Syriac, as also the Persian, Ethiopian, Armenian, Gothic, and Slavonic versions, and some Greek Fathers, among the rest, St. Chrysostom. Notwithstanding this, the judgment of critics is decidedly opposed to its genuineness. We are informed by Bloomfield (Greek Testament, vol. i., p. 34), “that, with the exception of Matthei, all the more eminent editors, from Erasmus and Grotius down to Scholz, have rejected it.” Although the Byzantine family of MSS. is favourable to its genuineness, still Scholz, whose leaning to this family of MSS. is so well known, after weighing the evidence *for* and *against*, subscribed to the judgment of those critics who rejected the passage as spurious. “Egomet,” he says, “cum complut. Erasmo, Camerario. Grotio, Milio, Bengelio, Wolsteinio, Griesbachio, eam ut spuriam rejeci” (Novum Testamentum Græce; Scholz textum recensuit, vol. i., p. 15).

Against it we have *intrinsic* evidence. It by no means harmonizes with the context. Its insertion, on the contrary, gives an appearance more harsh still to the reference made by our Redeemer, from verse 12 to verse 14.

Extrinsic evidence is far from being altogether in its favour. It has eight very ancient MSS. against it, including the Codex Vaticanus (see Bloomfield, vol. i., page 35). It is marked as doubtful in other Greek MSS. It is wanting in the Vulgate before and after St. Jerome’s time, and in some other versions. Many of the Greek and Latin Fathers are opposed to it. It is wanting in St. Luke (xii. 4), and it would be much easier to account for its insertion in St. Matthew, although not genuine, than it would for its omission in all the copies of St. Luke, if really genuine. No reason could be assigned for its total, universal omission in the latter case; whereas, its insertion in St. Matthew, even supposing it spurious, can be probably accounted for thus:—It was the custom of the Greek Church, from which is principally derived the extrinsic evidence in favour of the genuineness of the form in question, to make frequent use of Doxologies in the Liturgy. To the Greek Church, the Doxology, “*Glory be to the Father and to the Son*,” &c., now so commonly in use at the end of the Psalms, is attributed. It was the Greeks also that added to the “Hail, Mary,” because thou hast brought forth our Saviour. It was quite usual with St. Chrysostom and other Greek preachers to conclude their sermons with such words as these, “*For thine is the power and glory*,” &c. It is likely, then, that from the margin in which these and similar words were written, they were introduced into the text, through the mistake of copyists, by whom they were supposed to be part of the genuine text. Their introduction into the text of St. Matthew may be thus probably accounted for; whereas, if genuine, there could be no conceivable way of accounting for their omission in all the copies of St. Luke. Although spurious,

the Doxology in question must be, from a very early date, found in the text of this 13th verse of St. Matthew, since it is in the Peschito-Syriac version. It must come by surprise on those who charge the Catholic Church with curtailing the Lord's Prayer, in consequence of omitting the Doxology in question, to find that the most eminent Protestant critics and editors have agreed on rejecting it as spurious.—In the very last revision of the Bible published by the most distinguished Protestant Divines, it is utterly ignored and omitted.

14, 15. "*For if you forgive,*" &c. In the words of these verses, our Lord explains the reason of the addition made to the fifth petition, "*as we forgive our debtors*" (v. 12). He explains the condition of our obtaining the forgiveness we ask of God, viz., that we forgive our enemies, and He puts it in an *affirmative* and *negative* form, to show its importance; its absolute, indispensable necessity. It is, indeed, a most equitable condition. It is most equitable, that we should not obtain forgiveness of the vast debts we owe our Heavenly Father, our Creator and Master, if we refuse to remit to our brethren, His children, the trifling debts, which, on the grounds of offence, they owe us. In singling out this petition and the condition of securing it, our Lord shows the great importance as well as the necessity of charity and brotherly union.

"*If you forgive men their offences, your Heavenly Father,*" &c. This being an affirmative proposition, of course, can only mean, that the other requisite conditions be added, that is to say, if there be no other obstacle, God will forgive. If a man be the slave of other sins unrepented of lust, gluttony, &c., he cannot expect to be forgiven, even though he exercise mercy to his neighbour, unless he also repent of his sins and abandon his evil ways. At the same time, the exercise of charity and forgiveness will, no doubt, help, and very efficaciously, to obtain from God, the graces necessary to abandon sin and be reconciled to Him.

"*But, if you do not,*" &c. This is putting the same in a *negative* form, whence, it follows, that under no circumstances, can a man obtain forgiveness from God, who hates his neighbours and forgives not. The justice of requiring, that we forgive others before we are forgiven, is clearly expressed (Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 4, 5). "*Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself; and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh, nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God?*"

TEXT.

16. *And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.*

17. *But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head, and wash thy face :*

18. *That thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret : and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee.*

COMMENTARY.

16. Having given them instructions to avoid ostentation and vain glory in the practice of alms-deeds and prayer, our Lord now gives similar instructions regarding fasting. He places "*prayer*" between alms-deeds and fastings, as they hold the place of the two wings whereby it is borne aloft, "*bona est oratio cum jejuniis et eleemosyna.*"

"*Sad*," putting on a penitential, mournful appearance, wearing a morose countenance. Our Lord does not censure sadness of heart and soul, which produces contrition and penance; but only that stern sadness of visage, assumed for purposes of vain glory, and of gaining the praises of men. That sadness which may be the natural effect of fasting is not here censured, but the *motive* of putting it on.

"*Disfigure*," i.e. destroy the naturally cheerful and pleasing appearance of their countenance. Hiding this, they put on a pallid, emaciated aspect. This is the meaning of the Greek word, ἀφανίζουσι, which is well rendered in the Vulgate, *extermi-*
nant, and this they do in order that their fasts may be made known to men, and thus gain them the repute of being mortified men. He speaks of fasts really undergone, but for the purposes of vain glory. St. Chrysostom speaks of men in his day who did not fast at all, and pretended they did. These were greater hypocrites still than the Pharisees of old, who really fasted, but fasted from bad motives.

17, 18. "*Anoint*," &c. This is allusive to the custom prevalent in Judea, of anointing their hair and washing their face on festive and joyous occasions (Ruth iii. 3; 2 Kings xii. 20; Luke vii. 46). The climate and great heat made this process a necessary external accompaniment of joy. On the other hand, when in mourning, they paid no attention to their persons, the better to express the interior sorrow of their souls (2 Kings xiv. 2). The words of our Redeemer are not to be taken literally, as of obligation. They are to be understood metaphorically (although where the custom of "*anointing the head*," &c., on occasions of joy existed, they may be taken literally in connexion with their metaphorical signification), and are chiefly meant to convey to all Christians, at all times and periods, that in fasting they should dissemble it, and avoiding every incentive to vain glory, they should, putting aside all appearance of grief, appear to men cheerful and joyous, like those who "*anoint the head*," &c. So that our fasts may be seen by our Heavenly Father only, from whom alone we expect to receive the reward of our good actions. Some expositors (among them Bloomfield) say, the Jews, like the Greeks, regularly anointed their heads and washed their faces, save in times of mourning (Dan. x. 3). In that case, the words here would mean, whenever you fast, appear as usual, and put on no appearance of mourning or sorrow. Our Redeemer here refers only to *voluntary* fasting, *privately* practised; since, in reference to *public* fasting, performed on *public* grounds, and by *public* authority, there would be no particular grounds for boasting or indulging vain glory, as all should join in it; and hence, no motive for concealing the sorrow and penitential spirit which dictated it.

TEXT.

19. *Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves break through, and steal.*

20. *But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal.*

21. *For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.*

22. *The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single thy whole body shall be lightsome.*

23. *But if thy eye be evil thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee be darkness: the darkness itself how great shall it be.*

24. *No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon!*

COMMENTARY.

19. The Pharisees were slaves not only to vain-glory, the inordinate fondness for human applause, but also to avarice, the inordinate love of treasuring up riches. Hence, our Redeemer here cautions His followers against imitating them in this latter vice of avarice also, and dilates chiefly on this subject, to the close of this sixth chapter. Having pointed out the mode of giving alms, He here exhorts His followers to the practice of this good work, as a necessary accompaniment of prayer and fasting, of which He has been after treating; and having inculcated already the contempt of earthly goods, on the grounds of making them the means of showing mercy to our enemies (c. v. 40), here He inculcates the same for our own sakes, in order to secure greater treasures hereafter. Our Lord does not censure the possession of riches; but, the inordinate attachment and desire of possessing them.

"*Lay not up treasures on earth.*" If they must amass treasures, they are to amass them not on earth, where they are so fleeting and insecure. "*Rust*" consumes the precious metals; "*moths*," clothes; "*and thieves*," rifle and take away everything else of any value. This, then, is the first argument against amassing treasures here below, grounded on the fleeting and insecure possession we can have of them. Similar is the exhortation of St. Paul (1 Tim. vi. 9, 16-19).

"*Where the RUST and the MOTH,*" &c. The Greek has it inverted, "*where the MOTH and the RUST,*" &c. The Greek for "*rust*" means, "*a canker*," whatever consumes and eats into a thing.

20. "*But lay up*" (not for worthless ungrateful children or heirs, but), *for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" Heaven is the secure and permanent place for treasuring up their riches, by depositing them in the bosom of the poor, in alms-deeds. They shall thus amass their wealth more securely. That our Redeemer refers to alms-deeds, is clear from St. Luke (xii. 33). In this verse is contained another argument the opposite of the foregoing, viz., the permanent, eternal stability and firm security of the treasures laid up with God in heaven. (Tobias iv. ; xii. ; Psa. cxi. ; Prov. xix.)

21. "*For, where thy treasure is,*" &c. For, "*thy*," the received text, has "*your*" (*ὑμῶν*); but, the Vulgate "*tuus*" is supported by the Vatican MS., and versions generally. In this verse is adduced a second argument, founded on a proverbial saying generally admitted. The argument is this; admitting even that riches were not uncertain or fleeting on this earth, as has been stated already; still, it would be unworthy of hearts created for heaven, tending towards heaven, to be attached to them, as they surely would, according to the adage, "*wherever our treasure is, there is our heart*," there our affections are centred. By "*treasure*," is meant, whatever we regard as most precious, the object of our love and affections. By "*heart*," our love, our affections. As it would be unworthy of those created for heaven, which is our true country, whither we are tending, to have their affections centred on the things of this earth, this land of exile, through which we are journeying to our eternal home; we should not, therefore, love riches here, but transmit them to Heaven through the hands of the poor. Our Redeemer's object in this verse is to regulate our wills, and cause us to value eternal goods only; and by regarding them as alone of any value, to have no other view, but to arrive at their secure possession in heaven. The same is suggested in the following illustrations also.

22. The eye holds the same place, or rather does the same service in the body,

that a lamp does to the place where it is lighted. In the *received* Greek text it is, "THE *eye* is the light of the body." "*Thy*" is omitted. In the Greek edition of Cardinal Mai it is, "*thine* eye is the light of the body." A general adagial truth is affirmed here.

"*Single*," clear, sound, free from noxious humours; "*thy whole body shall be lightsome*," *i.e.*, furnished with sufficient light to perform its proper functions. In these words, and in the beginning of next verse (23) is drawn the deduction from the general truth of the preceding adage. Hence, we have in the Greek, "if (THEREFORE) *thine* eye be single," &c.

23. "*Evil*," the opposite of "*single*," dim, affected with noxious humours. "*Body . . . darksome*," groping in the dark, in performing its functions, because deprived of the directing guidance of the eye.

"*If, then, the light that is in thee*," *i.e.*, that *should* be in thee. If what should be lightsome, be itself, "*darkness*," "*the darkness itself, how great shall it be?*" *i.e.*, how darksome shall the other members of the body become, which are of their own nature destitute of light, in case the eye itself be "*darksome*"? The words may be also interpreted to include the eye itself, supposed to be destitute of light, like the other members of the body, thus: "*If the light that is in thee be darksome, how great will the darkness of the entire body be?*" In these latter words, "*If then, the light that is in thee*," &c., is contained the *application* of the parable

"*The eye*," it is needless to say, is used metaphorically. Some understand it to refer to the practical judgment of the mind or intellect, the same as the light of conscience, which holds the same relation, or performs the same office, in regard to the soul, that "*the eye*" does in relation to the "*body*." If the mind or intellect be free from the evil humours and clouding influences of the passions, the soul will tend to God, and be enlightened by His heavenly grace. But, if it be clouded by passion, and particularly by avarice or the love of money, against which our Redeemer here cautions us, which is strongly denounced by the Wise Man (Eccles. x. 10), and so fearfully depicted by St. Paul (1 Tim. vi. 9, &c.); "*the whole body*" (*of our actions*), all the other faculties of the soul, shall be infected with this darksome evil. The *heart* shall be bent on earthly things. The connexion with the foregoing in this interpretation will be this: If our treasure be on earth, everything, even our best actions, shall be referred to the sordid acquisition of pelf, in which the heart of the avaricious man is centered, and God lost sight of. Hence, the evil of having our treasure on the earth.

By "*the eye*," St. Augustine and others understand our intentions in our actions. If the intention be simple, upright, and directed to God, it will impart goodness to all our actions, not otherwise evil. If impure, if it have in view the gratification of our passions, particularly the sordid passion of avarice, then, all our actions are infected by it; they become darksome, and cease to be meritorious with God. In this interpretation the connexion with the preceding is this: If we wish to lay up treasures in heaven, we must do so, having our hearts raised up to God with a pure intention. The scope of our Redeemer in this entire chapter, regarding the *mode* of praying, fasting, &c., favours this latter mode of connexion and interpretation; or, we need not necessarily connect it with the preceding at all. It may be an independent maxim uttered, among others, by our Sovereign Lord, without any reference to what precedes or follows.

24. This is a further reason for not laying up for ourselves treasures on earth.

The preceding reasons or arguments were grounded on the fleeting nature and instability of such treasures (19); on the total absorption of our affections by them (21); on their destroying the merits of our actions and withdrawing us from God (22, 23). Here, it is founded on the grievous slavery it entails. We become the slaves of this earthly treasure, on which our hearts are set. We cannot serve it and God at the same time.

"No man can serve two masters." This is an adage generally received, and true in almost all cases; and from the reasoning which follows, *"for, he will either hate the one,"* &c., it is clear that our Redeemer refers to the service dictated by love and affection (and it is against the absorbing love of riches He here wishes to caution His followers). The adage, generally true in all cases of double service, where different orders are given, is particularly true where the two masters give opposite orders. There is an incompatibility in a servant, from the very nature of his position, having his love and faithful service distracted between both. If there be question of masters who, though different or distinct, are subordinate, one to the other, they may be regarded as one. Thus, one servant can serve the several members of a household, as subordinate, all to the head. By *"master,"* is understood everything, to which we are too much addicted, as if enslaved.

"For, either he will hate the one and love the other." *"On,"* is by a well-known Hebrew idiom, put for *"first;"* *"the other,"* for *"second."* The words may be thus illustrated: Suppose the masters to be Peter and Paul. He will either hate the first (that is, Peter), and love the second (Paul); or he will hold to the first (Peter), and serve him, and despise the other (Paul). The opposition in the disjunctive clauses is not between the persons, but between the love and the hatred in one and the same person. *"Hating"* and *"loving"* may be understood in a lesser or greater degree of intensity.

The Greek word for *"sustain"* (*avθεξεται*) denotes the strongest attachment. St. Augustine understands *"sustains,"* or, *"hold to,"* of riches or *"mammon,"* and translates it, *pactator*, he will *endure* or *tolerate*, as if to say, if he devote himself to the service of this tyrant, mammon, to the rejection and contempt of God, he can only *endure* or *tolerate* him, but *love* him he cannot. The former interpretation is more in accordance with the received meaning of the Greek word, *avθεξεται*.

"You cannot serve God and mammon." This is the application of the general adage quoted in the foregoing. *"Mammon"* is a Syriac word, signifying *riches*. In the Chaldaic Targum of Onkelos, it is used for *money* (Exod. xxi. 21); and of *Jonathan* (Jud. xviii. 30). St. Augustine tells us that in the Punic language, it means *gain* (De Ser. Dom. Lib. ii.). It is here personified; for, indeed, the avaricious man makes a god of his riches, just as some make *"a god of their belly"* (Phil. iii. 19). Hence, St. Paul terms riches *"the serving of idols"* (Eph. v. 5). Our Redeemer does not say, *"you cannot be rich and serve God;"* because, a man may be rich, like the patriarchs of old, and many just men, without being inordinately attached to riches; without *"serving"* them as the treasures of their hearts. God and riches are antithetical. It is the *service* of both that is incompatible. The love of riches is generally one of the greatest obstacles to the salvation of the world. The desire of riches, or their abuse, if possessed, is one of the means most successfully employed by the devil for the ruin of man. *"It is easier for a camel,"* &c. (See also St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi.) On this account, it is, our Redeemer commands all those who range themselves under His standard, to despise the riches of this earth, after His own example; or, to use them, only as means towards possessing and enjoying the riches of heaven.

TEXT.

25. *For I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat; and the body more than the raiment?*

26. *Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?*

27. *And which of you by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?*

28. *And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin.*

29. *But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.*

30. *And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith?*

31. *Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?*

32. *For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.*

COMMENTARY

25. Since, then, we cannot serve God and mammon at the same time, and cannot have our hearts attached to the things of earth, if we wish to serve God: we must, therefore, in order to serve God, whom alone we should serve, not merely be content with avoiding the unnecessary amassing of riches, but we must divest ourselves of all anxious, corroding solicitude for the very necessities of life: all distrustful forecasting of future provision as regards these necessities. Such solicitude generally binds the soul to earth, and belongs to the service of mammon. In this, our Lord obviates a tacit objection, or rather pretext, for concealing avarice, which men would put forward in justification of their constant striving for the things of earth, viz., the plea of securing the necessities of life. Our Redeemer knew well how deeply rooted such a feeling of solicitude is in the human heart; hence, He not only draws an argument from the foregoing against indulging in such solicitude; but, in the following, He proceeds to show, from several arguments, the utter folly and inutility of the anxiety. He condemns in reference to these very necessities, either as regard soul or body; for of both, soul and body, human nature is composed. "*Solicitous*," the Greek word, *μεριμνα*, signifies *distracting care, corroding anxiety*. In one or two passages of the New Testament, *μεριμνα* denotes laudable anxiety (2 Cor. xi.; Philip. ii. 20), but it is generally used to denote distracting, distrustful care. (When laudable solicitude is in question, the Greek word used is, *σπουδή*.) In employing the former word, our Redeemer shows He does not censure a prudent, thoughtful diligence in regard to the necessities of life, as is sanctioned by right reason, and the example of all the saints. It is only the man that sows that can expect to reap, and reap fruit of the same kind as the seed sown. The Scripture itself praises the diligence of the laborious ant (Prov. vi. 6). St. Paul laboured with his hands to procure an independent sustenance (Acts xx.; 1 Thess. ii.); and, writing to the Ephesians (c. iv.) he commands the idle to labour so as to furnish necessities to the needy. He tells the idle among the Thessalonians, "*not to eat*" (2 Thess. iii. 10). What our Lord, then, censures and warns us against is that anxious, fretful, anticipating solicitude, which implies a distrust in God's providence, and also fixes the heart on earth and withdraws it from God.

"*The life*," (*anima*) is understood by some to mean, the *soul* of man. It is opposed to the "*body*," not that the soul needs food; but, food is necessary to keep the *soul*,

which is the principle of life, in the body. Others understand it to mean, in accordance with the Hebrew usage, *life* (Job ii. 6; St. Augustine, Lib. ii. de Serm. Domini, c. 22). To the words, "*what you shall eat*," are added in the Greek and Syriac, "*nor what you shall drink*." St. Jerome rejects them.

"*Is not the life more than the food?*" &c. Our Redeemer adduces several reasons to dissuade us from indulging in these distracting anxieties. The first is given here. He, who gave what is greater and more valuable, will not refuse what is less valuable, and is, moreover, necessary for the preservation of His own more precious gifts. The *soul* or *life* given by God is more valuable than the aliments necessary to sustain it; and the body more valuable than the necessary covering. We must, therefore, trust that He, who gave the former, will not fail to provide the latter.

26. A second reason to dissuade us from inordinate anxiety: If God takes such care of the birds of the air, "*the (worthless) ravens*" (Luke xii. 24), as to provide them with food, without any solicitude on their part, how much greater care will He not take of men, for whose use and benefit the rest of creation was formed? (See also Psa. 9; Job xxxviii. 41.)

"*Of the air*," to show forth in a still clearer light, God's providence, as the birds of the air are not fed by men, like domestic fowl. He instances "*birds*" beyond any others: because, they are the most insignificant of animals. They remind us of raising ourselves above the things of this earth. They also seem the most indifferent beings in creation, about providing themselves, save casually, with food.

"*They neither sow*," &c. This by no means implies, that in contravention of the primal decree, "*in sudore vultus tui, &c.*" (Gen. iii. 19), we, like the birds of the air, should follow no industrial pursuit, nor labour for our support. It conveys merely this, that, since the Creator feeds these animals, who have no other occupation or direction, save the dictates of their animal instincts, we should be persuaded, that He who is not only our Creator, but our Father also, will not fail to provide the necessary means of subsistence for us. His children, while engaged in following His holy will and precepts. So that if our duties in life should engage us in occupations other than those necessary to provide sustenance, such as sowing and reaping, we need not fear that we shall be deprived of the necessary sustenance.

The force of the argument consists, not in the comparison of man, or his occupations, with the birds: but, in the difference of relations and dispositions of God in regard to both, indicated in the words, "*your heavenly Father*." (Jansen. Gandav.) "*Your Father*." He is only their Creator; but, He bears also the tender relation and natural solicitude of a parent for you. "*Heavenly*," conveys that, while dwelling in the heavens, He does not disdain to regulate earthly and temporal concerns; since His providence extends to the very ravens; and surely He will do more for His children than for the worthless ravens of the air.

27. "*And which of you by taking thought?*" &c. This is a third reason for laying aside all distracting solicitude, derived from its utter folly and inefficacy. The words of St. Luke (xii. 25, 26) would seem to point to this as an argument, a *minore ad majus*. According to some commentators (among them Barradius), our Redeemer institutes no comparison whatsoever. These understand the words to mean, "If by anxious thought, you cannot add a single cubit to your stature, a very inconsiderable thing; if you cannot do the least thing by it, why, then, employ anxious thought about anything else in regard to which such disquieting solicitude can be of no avail, unless God's providence interposes?" "*Why are you solicitous for the rest?*"

Luke xii. 26). According to these interpreters, there is no comparison whatsoever instituted. Others understand the words as expressing a comparison, as is implied in St. Luke, and interpret them thus, in allusion to the necessities of life: "If you cannot, by your solicitude, add to your stature a single cubit, how much less can you procure the necessities of life, which is but a conservation in existence, a continued series of acts of creation of the entire man, requiring, therefore, more power than if required to add a single cubit to your stature?" When, therefore, all your solicitude will prove of no avail to you to do a comparatively trifling thing, why, then, indulge in such vain feelings of solicitude, in reference to greater, viz., food and the preservation of life, and not rather commit yourself to His providence who, without any anxiety on your part, has preserved you to the present time, conferred on you your present stature, and will, no doubt, provide for your continuance in existence. Others, understanding the Greek word for "*stature*" to mean, age, and "*cubit*," a period of time, interpret the passage thus: "If you cannot add the shortest *time* to your *age*, how much less can you prolong life during the entire term of your existence?"

"*By thinking.*" The Greek word implies, distracting care, which shows what kind of solicitude our Redeemer warns us against here.

28. A fourth reason to dissuade us from solicitude. From food—the more necessary means of subsistence—He proceeds to treat of raiment, which is less necessary, and also serves for ornament. He now employs an illustration, borrowed from the flowers of the field, as He had already done with regard to the birds of the air, to dissuade us from distracting solicitude.

"*The lilies of the field,*" which, growing wild, unlike the flowers of the garden, tended by man, owe nothing to human care or culture.

"*How they grow?*" Their growth and expansion in leaves and foliage is their clothing. "*They labour not,*" to obtain clothing, as do men, "*nor spin,*" the occupation of women.

29. "*Solomon,*" the most magnificent of monarchs, whose apparel was so costly, "*in all his glory,*" at the very height of all his glory and magnificence. Or, during the entire period of his glorious reign (St. Chrysostom).

"*Was arrayed as one of these.*" "What silken works, what royal purple, what woven picture, can be compared to flowers? What so blushing as the rose? What so white as the lily?" (St. Jerome.)

30. What He calls above, "*the lilies of the field,*" He now calls "*grass of the field,*" to show how God can and does invest the most worthless thing with exquisite beauty. "*Which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast,*" &c., a thing of short-lived, passing existence. "*God doth so clothe,*" as to exceed the glory of Solomon, with how much greater care will He not provide the necessary clothing for His own children, and invest them with beauty, who are to exist not for a day; but, destined to live for eternity with Himself, as heirs of His kingdom, and who, now, for want of due faith and confidence, distrust His paternal providence? "*O ye, of little faith.*"

The words, "*labour not,*" &c., are not opposed to our labouring and earning our bread with the sweat of our brow, as has been already explained (v. 26). They are only meant to convey, that God will not be wanting to us any more than He is to the very flowers of the field, even though our occupations in life may not directly tend to our providing bodily sustenance, such as, sowing, reaping, spinning, &c.,

as is the case with those engaged in preaching the Gospel, &c. This passage conveys a wholesome lesson, and a well-merited reproof to those who display an excessive desire for the vanities of dress.

31. Having adduced proofs in the foregoing of the fatherly providence of God in our regard, and of the utter folly of anxious solicitude on our part, our Redeemer now concludes what He already proposed, and more clearly explains in what this solicitude consists, "*What shall we eat?*" &c. He shows that He has been censuring that timorous, anxious solicitude which betrays distrust in God's providence.

32. Such solicitude is heathen and not Christian; and as our love of our fellow-creatures should differ from that exhibited by the Pagans (c. v. 47), so also should our confidence in God's fatherly providence; and, as we must surpass the Scribes and Pharisees, if we wish to enter into the kingdom of heaven; so must we surpass the unbelieving Pagans who know not God. In this is conveyed a fifth reason for avoiding undue anxiety.

"*For, your Father knoweth,*" &c. In this is conveyed a sixth reason, and from it we clearly see the nature of the solicitude condemned by our Redeemer. It arose from a want of faith in God's power, omniscience, and fatherly providence. "*Your Father,*" shows God's benevolence towards us, His will to assist us. His power is implied and expressed in the words, "*Heavenly Father,*" and more clearly still in the Greek (*ὁ οὐρανός*), "*He who dwells in the heavens.*" His omniscience and knowledge of our wants is clearly expressed, "*knoweth,*" &c. Why not, then, cast all our cares on Him? "*for, He hath care of us*" (1 Peter v. 7). Where is the father with a full knowledge of the wants of his children, that will refuse, when in his power, to succour them? And if this be true of earthly fathers, how much more so must it not be of the best of Fathers who is in heaven? As God, He knows our necessities; as a Father, He wishes to relieve them; as *Heavenly* Lord of all things, He can do so.

TEXT.

33. *Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

34. *Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.*

COMMENTARY.

33. After the *negative* precept prohibiting excessive anxiety in regard to the necessities of life, our Redeemer now proposes a *positive* or *affirmative* precept, showing how we are to differ from the Pagans, and how we are to obtain through God's paternal providence, the necessities of life, without any excessive solicitude on our part.

"*Seek*" He does not say, "*be solicitous.*" For, even in reference to our spiritual wants, we should not indulge in distracting solicitude, "*nihil solliciti sitis,*" &c. (St. Paul, Phil. iv.)

"*Therefore.*" The Greek is (*δε*, *but*) as if, in opposition to the conduct and thoughts of the heathens, He said, the Pagans seek after temporal matters; "*but,*" as for you who have God for Father, "*seek first,*" &c.

"*First,*" i.e., chiefly, in preference to anything else; "*first,*" in order, not of time, but, of appreciation.

"*The kingdom of God*," i.e., the attainment of heavenly bliss, compared with which everything else is mere dross. This is the first and chief object to be sought for as regards ourselves. But, in reference to God, and absolutely speaking, God's glory is the first thing to be sought for. Hence, in these words, there is no opposition to the order of petitions in the Lord's Prayer. "*Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come*;" which is ranged in the second place. For, even while labouring and seeking to obtain heavenly bliss, we must "*first*," and absolutely, seek God's glory.

"*And His justice*." The justice of God—in contradistinction to that of the Scribes and Pharisees—which is grace, sanctification, the observance of God's law, which are the necessary means for obtaining God's kingdom.

Others, by "*the kingdom of God*," understand, His grace, by which He reigns in our hearts; and these understand the words, "*and His justice*," to be explanatory of the word, "*kingdom*," so as to mean, "*seek God's kingdom*," that is to say, His justice, grace, and sanctity.

"*And all these things*," i.e., temporal blessings, the necessities of life, &c., "*shall be added unto you*." This does not mean, that we are never allowed to seek for temporal things as subservient to our eternal interests; since, we are commanded to pray for them. "*Give us this day our daily bread*," &c. The words mean, that if we devote our chief care and solicitude to the concerns of salvation, and propose its attainment, as our absolute final end in all things, God will provide all other things for us, as far as they may answer these ends. The words show that temporal interests are mere accessories of the affairs of salvation; mere secondary appendages, subservient to them. In this promise, is always implied the condition, viz., "*provided the granting of these temporal blessings be not an obstacle to our salvation*." Similar is the promise, with a like implied condition, "*inquirentes Dominum non deficient omni bono*," "*non est inopia timentibus eum*," and although in the case of many just men "*seeking the kingdom of God*," the necessities of life are withheld; still, in their case, the promise is verified, as He gives them blessings of a higher order, in which "*all these things*" are eminently contained. If God give not *these things* specifically, He gives them in gifts of far higher value. And He, who rewards every man's work according to merit, may, for the fuller and more perfect remuneration of the just man, subject him to poverty and want in this life, as a temporal punishment of some fault; lest, the eternal reward be retarded, or diminished—and moreover, He means to give him an opportunity of increasing his merit by patience and conformity to His adorable will.

34. "*Solicitous*." The Greek word (*μεριμνησῆτε*) shows what the solicitude referred to is.

"*Therefore*," shows this to be an inference from the foregoing. As the birds of the air are fed and their future provided for by God; as God will add the necessities of life, if we seek the kingdom of heaven; we should, therefore, banish all distracting cares in regard to the future.

"*To-morrow*." St. Augustine understands this word to mean, temporal things; as if to say, be not solicitous about temporal things. They shall be solicitous for themselves; they shall be at hand when wanted. It will be sufficient to take what necessity may require. St. Chrysostom understands it, of the *superfluities* of life. Be not concerned about whatever is above the necessary provision for each day's subsistence. Superfluities will mind themselves, were you to amass ever so much of them, and enjoy them not; they will be always sure to find one who will use them. The labour and misery which you suffer for the necessities of life are sufficient; do not,

therefore, labour for superfluities, lest the labour be yours, and the fruition belong to others.

The most probable meaning of "*to-morrow*" is, the *future time*—the sense it bears (1 Kings xxviii. 19)—"*cras eris tu et filii tui*," &c." (Josue xxii. 24); "*cras dicent filii vestri*," &c. Put aside all anxious anticipations and distracting solicitude regarding the future. It is a proverb universally in use, "*To-morrow will bring its own care*," and so leave to to-morrow its own care. If you anticipate to-morrow's care, you will only add to the care of to-day that of to-morrow, without lightening to-morrow's, and your solicitude for to-day will still continue. You only accumulate cares, and submit to bear at once what God intended to be borne separately and in succession. By adding to-morrow's care to that of to-day, you will only be accumulating cares, and aggravating those of to-day, without diminishing or lightening those of to-morrow.

"*To-morrow will be solicitous for itself.*" The Greek is, "*will be solicitous about the things of itself*"—or, about the things that appertain to itself. Our Redeemer personifies to-morrow; and by this strong figure of speech, He means to convey that, independently of any action, or care, or provision, on our part, matter for solicitude will arise on each day, in a way peculiar to itself, whether we will it or no.

Our Redeemer does not, of course, prohibit here a prudent provision and preparation to meet future necessities. The necessary forecasting and provision for future days or years may be said to belong, not to *to-morrow*, but to *to-day*. He does not prevent necessary care and prudent forethought. The words, "*to-morrow will be solicitous for itself*," show, He does not mean to censure the solicitude and diligence necessarily accompanying human existence.

"*Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.*" "*The evil*," i.e., the affliction, the care, solicitude, trouble, incident to it. Our Redeemer, by transferring to each day the trouble which men endure on it, conveys, that we do it a wrong when we charge or burden it with the trouble of the coming day. For each day its own trouble is enough. It is deserving of remark, that our Redeemer prohibits not labour, but solicitude. The former is enjoined on the entire human race, "*in sudore vultus tui comedes panem tuum*" (Gen. iii. 19). The latter, in the sense already explained, is prohibited.

CHAPTER VII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter our Lord cautions us against rash judgments, in order thus to escape the harsh judgments of men, and the just judgment of God. According as we are severe on others, or lenient, will they in turn treat us, and will God be inclined to pass a just judgment of condemnation, or a judgment of mercy on us (1-2). In order to meet the hypocritical pretext which the men he alludes to might allege, in harshly judging and correcting others, He admonishes them, that charity begins at home, and they should first commence with correcting their own graver faults, before correcting the lighter faults of their neighbour (3-5). He shows that correction is not to be indiscriminately administered to all; to some it may prove injurious and only provoke anger and retaliation, nor should holy things be given to those publicly unworthy (6). He inculcates the necessity, the conditions of prayer, its efficacy, when vested with the proper conditions, both as to its object and the dispositions with which it is offered (7-11). He summarily expresses all the duties we owe our neighbour, as contained in the leading principle of the Natural and Divine Law, whether in the Old Testament or the New, viz., to treat him as we would reasonably expect to be treated by him in turn (12). He exhorts us to enter the narrow gate, and ~~strait~~ road that leads to life, upon which but comparatively few enter, because this way of God's Holy Commandments is so opposed to the dictates and corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood (13-14). He cautions us against trusting ourselves on this journey to the guidance of corrupt hypocrites, self sent, having no Divine commission, affecting the external garb of sanctity (15). He gives a sign for knowing these false

teachers, derived from their doctrine and its consequences, joined to their own personal conduct (15-20). He next shows the absolute indispensable necessity of good works, and personal sanctity, in order to secure a favourable judgment, and eternal happiness in the end (21-23). He illustrates the necessity, not only of hearing His words, but also of carrying them into effect, by a very striking similitude of the house built upon a rock, and the house built upon the sand (24-27). The Evangelist describes the effect this wonderful discourse of our Lord produced on His hearers (28-29).

TEXT.

JUDGE not, that you may not be judged.

2. *For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged : and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

COMMENTARY.

1. Our Lord, in the beginning of this chapter, censures another vice of the Pharisees, against which He cautions His followers, viz., that of indulging in false and rash judgments. In this, there is question of private judgments ; but not of the exercise of judicial power, or of official sentences and judgments, which it belongs to judges, civil or ecclesiastical, to pronounce in public, in accordance with justice and the provisions of law. "If," says St. Jerome, "He forbids to judge, how is it that Paul judges the incestuous Corinthian, and Peter rebukes Ananias and Sapphira for falsehood? He did not forbid us to judge, but He taught us *how* to judge." Our Lord Himself judged and condemned the Scribes and Pharisees. Private individuals should never usurp the right of authoritative judgment. There is question also of private judgments, passed in cases of doubtful guilt. If a crime be public and notorious, its condemnation is not censured here ; such condemnation is a homage rendered to the Divine law. But pity for the culprit should accompany the hatred of the offence (Kenrick).

"*Judge not*," unkindly and rashly. "*That you may not be judged*," means, according to some, that you may escape the judgments of men, who *generally* pass a severe judgment on such as are themselves hard on others, and *generally* are lenient to such as are themselves kind. I say, *generally*, because there are exceptions, as we see in the unkind, rash, and unjust judgments passed on our Redeemer, His Apostles, &c. Our Lord quotes adagial sayings, common among men, admitting, however, of exceptions. Although the words may include the judgments of men, they probably refer, primarily and principally, to the judgment of God. Not that God will judge us, as we judge others, that is to say, rashly or unjustly ; He shall do so, however, strictly and severely, in proportion to the severity of our judgment on others.

"*Judge not*," your neighbour harshly, or rashly, that you may thus escape the unkind judgments of men, and the severe and strict judgment of God. The *substance*, but not the *mode* of judgment passed by God, is implied. If we are merciful and kind in our judgments on others, giving everything the best construction, excusing the intention, when we cannot excuse the act ; then, God will, in turn, pass a merciful judgment on us, and this charity will incline Him to arrange the decrees of His providence, so to deal with us, so to guide our course, as to ensure our perseverance, if we are good, or effect our conversion if in sin ; and that in the end, His just judgment will be tempered with mercy, while a judgment without mercy will be passed on him who himself showed no mercy.

We need not trouble ourselves with seeking to find any certain order or connexion of this with the preceding chapter. For, treating of different subjects (as our Redeemer does in this Sermon on the Mount), a speaker does not necessarily follow any particular connexion. Some of the truths He enunciates are quite

independent of those which preceded them, and need have no connexion with them. Moreover, it may be that the Evangelists did not record the words delivered by our Redeemer in His Sermon on the Mount, in the order in which they were delivered. In St. Luke the words of this verse are read (c. vi. 37), after the words, "*Be ye therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful*" (v. 36). Hence, if we sought to trace any connexion, we might say, that our Redeemer here reverts to the subject of loving our enemies (c. v. 44, &c.), after having interposed in (c. vi.), the dissertation on purity of intention, and on avoiding undue solicitude.

In some editions, to the words of this verse are added the words, "*condemn not, that you may not be condemned.*" This is in accordance with the reading in St. Luke (c. vi. 37). They are not, however, found in the oldest Latin copies of St. Matthew, nor in the Greek. Hence, it is most likely, they were transferred to this place from St. Luke.

2. "*For, with what judgment you have judged, you shall be judged,*" &c. These words, as understood of human judgments, clearly mean, that according as we treat others, whether in judging, or remitting, offences, or giving aid, or neglecting to succour them, we shall be treated by them in turn. Men will be lenient and indulgent, or severe and harsh towards us, according as we judge them leniently or severely. Understood of God's judgment, to which they, most probably, refer, the words mean, that a judgment will be passed on us by God, of the same kind as that passed by us on others, injustice being always supposed to be excluded from God's judgment. If we be lenient and merciful to others, so will God be to us. On the other hand, if we be severe or harsh in judging our neighbour, God will pass a judgment without mercy, that is, a judgment of condemnation on us, but, *this* judgment will be always *most just*. Although a greater amount of reward or punishment shall be given to us than we award to others—St. Luke says (c. vi. 38), "*good measure and pressed down,*" &c.; St. Paul says, "*Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us beyond measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor. iv. 17)—thus showing the inequality as regards the amount—still, there shall be some proportion; a proportionate judgment, and a proportionate measure. If we judge mercifully, we shall receive a favourable judgment; if we judge harshly or unjustly, a just judgment of condemnation.

In this verse, our Lord proposes to inculcate the observance of the great principle of the natural law (verse 12), "*All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.*" The words of this verse (2), and several other expressions employed in this chapter, are clearly proverbial, and quoted in their proverbial and commonly received meaning, by our Divine Redeemer.

TEXT.

3. *And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

4. *Or how sayest thou to thy brother; Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye?*

5. *Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

6. *Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you.*

COMMENTARY.

3, 4. Lest these men, whose vices are condemned in the foregoing, might pretend that in their severe strictures on their neighbour, they were only actuated by charitable motives of fraternal correction and amendment, our Redeemer here meets this false pretence, by showing, that as charity begins at home, if charity was their impelling motive, they should commence with self correction; since, their own faults were far more grievous than those they censured in their brethren. By "*mote*," is meant a small particle of wood, like a straw or splinter, figuratively denoting trivial faults, at least, comparatively. By "*beam*," a large piece of wood, denoting grievous and heavy crimes. By "*beam*" (*δοκον*), some understand a "*thorn*," which would fit in the eye better than a beam or large piece of timber. The phrase is adagial, frequently found in the Rabbinical writings, to denote light and grievous transgressions, and employed in that sense by our Redeemer here, and Luke (vi. 41-42). Then, in this passage, our Redeemer censures this description of rash and unjust judgments, on the part of those who are guilty of the monstrous inconsistency of passing judgment, and that without necessity, on the light faults of others, while they themselves are loaded with grievous faults.

5. "*Hypocrite*." For meaning (see vi. 2). They are called "*hypocrites*," because they assume a false, a masked character, in pretending to be actuated by charity, which should begin at home, and commence with self correction; their love for themselves should be the rule of their love for their neighbours—or, because they would pretend, by noticing the slight faults of others, to a great love and zeal for sanctity, of which they were utterly destitute. If a zeal for virtue were their actuating motive, they would first attend to self amendment, which they much needed, before assuming the office of censors. By correcting the slight faults of others, while weighed down with heavy faults himself, in order to acquire a character for sanctity, one acts the hypocrite, and renders truth odious. This is all our Redeemer prohibits here, as is clear from his calling them "*hypocrites*." But, He by no means, prohibits a man who may himself be subject to greater faults, from correcting his neighbour in those of lesser enormity, if he do so, not from motives of hypocrisy, but, from a sincere feeling and motive of charity.

6. This may be an injunction altogether disconnected with what either precedes or follows; or, if connexion be sought, it may be connected thus: Our Redeemer having shown in the preceding, who they are who should not venture to correct, to judge or teach, here points out who they are, who should not be corrected or taught, viz., those whom correction would render worse than they are, whom it would irritate rather than cure. This precaution was necessary, as those who were not allowed to correct others, till they had first cast out the beam from their own eye, and having done so, were free from fault, might imagine they were at liberty to exercise the duty of correction, indiscriminately, without any regard to the dispositions of those whose correction they might undertake.

By "*holy*," was meant, among the Jews, whatever was set apart from all human use, and consecrated to the Divine service. Here, it is taken in the same sense, and refers to the doctrine of the Gospel, which is called "*holy*," on account of its Divine nature, origin, and tendency, and "*pearls*," on account of its excessive value and preciousness. "*Pearls*" bear some resemblance to acorns, the ordinary food of swine in the East. "*Holy*" and "*pearls*" refer to the same thing, viz., the doctrine of the Gospel; and, probably, they embrace the sacraments, called

"*holy*," because devoted to the Divine service, and "*pearls*," on account of their priceless value; and this is especially true of the adorable Eucharist, which is holiness itself. "*Dogs*," everywhere represented in SS. Scripture as impure animals, full of rage, aptly represent those refractory and rebellious men, who violently resist the truth, and assault its propagators. "*Swine*," also—proverbially unclean—are a fit emblem of that unclean and sensual class of men, who are dead to every feeling of moral sense. The phrase is adagial, conveying, that we should not unnecessarily expose the doctrines or mysteries of faith to profanation, unless in circumstances where there is a prospect of promoting God's glory, or of saving our neighbour. We should not preach the doctrines of faith, or extend the duty of correction, to the incorrigible class of sinners referred to, be they believers or unbelievers.

It does not militate against this, that our Redeemer and His Apostles, and St. Stephen, &c., preached the truth in circumstances where it was resisted, and they assailed. For, this they did in presence of believers also, whose faith was confirmed, although some unbelievers present may have been hardened; or, they did it in defence of the truth, when interrogated, under circumstances, when God's glory or their neighbours' salvation required them to speak out in vindication of the truth.

"*And turning upon you, tear you*," is, by some, understood of *dogs*. "*Trampling under their feet*," of "*swine*." But the former words may be also true of "*swine*," or wild bears. The words, "*pearls*" and "*holy*," are understood by many, of the sacraments, and especially of the Holy Eucharist. The prohibition here expressed does not prevent us from giving the Holy Eucharist to *private* sinners, as had been done by our Redeemer, for our instruction in this point, in regard to Judas at the Last Supper. Hence, as long as they are *private* sinners, we are **not warranted** in refusing them. But, if they be *public* sinners, the prohibition holds.

TEXT.

7. *Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*

8. *For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

9. *Or what man is there among you, of whom, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone?*

10. *Or if he shall ask a fish, will he reach him a serpent?*

11. *If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

COMMENTARY.

7. "*Ask*," &c. These words are connected by some commentators (Maldonatus, &c.) with the Lord's Prayer (vi. 9-15), as if our Lord was pointing out the mode in which we should pray for the petitions contained in the Lord's Prayer, and they are so connected by St. Luke (xi. 9). Others connect them with the foregoing, thus: Our Lord's precepts were very hard of accomplishment; the duties He imposes, beyond human strength, beyond the power of human nature, weakened by sin. He, therefore, points out both the source whence the necessary strength is to come, viz., from heaven, whence every good gift descends from the Father of lights, as also the infallible means of obtaining this necessary strength; and that is, prayer, offered up with the proper conditions and dispositions. Let them beg it of God, and He will give them grace and strength. "*Ask*," "*seek*," "*knock*." These words are differently interpreted; but they, most likely, denote the different leading qualities of prayer.

"*Ask*," with confidence; "*seek*," with diligence; "*knock*," with unceasing perseverance. Of course, the words of this and the following verse being affirmative propositions, imply that we shall obtain the fruit of our petitions, all the other necessary conditions being observed; that is to say, provided we pray with the proper dispositions, both as regards the mode of praying and our own state of soul. For, we pray and receive not, "*because we ask amiss*" (James iv.); and if we are determined to persevere in sin, or if we entertain feelings of vengeance, God will not hear us (Prov. xxviii. 9; John iii. 21; Prov. xxi.; Matt. vi. 15). Also, the object of our petitions should be good, and conducive to our salvation, and sought for in a spirit of conformity to God's holy will. Indeed, in every good prayer relating to temporal blessings, and immunity from temporal evils and sufferings, the condition, that God sees that they would serve our eternal salvation, is always implied (see 1 John v. 14, commentary on).

8. "*For, every one that asketh*," provided he does so as he ought, both in regard to conditions and matter of prayer, and his own personal dispositions, "*receiveth*," &c. In this general proposition, the last is repeated in a still more emphatic form. No one can allege his own weakness in excuse. To all, without exception, is given the grace of prayer, the expedite means of obtaining the necessary grace and strength from God. This is not confined to any particular person or class. "*Every one*," be he saint or sinner, has the assurance of the Son of God Himself—infallible truth—that, if he pray as he ought, he shall be heard. From these words, it is inferred, that prayer is a necessary means of grace; that grace is given on condition that we pray for it. "*Ask, and it shall be given to you.*" Therefore, if we ask not, it shall not be given, is implied. This is particularly true of *that great gift*—that crowning grace—of final perseverance (Concil. Trid. §§ vi. Can. xvi.), which, if we obtain, we are saved; if we fail to obtain, we are lost. (Con. Trid. §§ vi. Can. xxii.) This is of faith (Concil. Trid. §§ vi. Can. xxii;) and although it is not of faith, it is still quite certain that there is only one means of securing this all-necessary grace. That one only means is prayer. It cannot be *merited*, but it can be *infallibly obtained*, by persevering prayer. "*Suppliciter emereri potest*" (St. Augustine).

9-11. "*Bread*," though in nature and substance quite different from "*a stone*," in form and colour, resembles it. The same is true of "*a fish*" and "*a serpent*." Man is said to be "*evil*," either compared with God, whose nature is Infinite goodness, "*who in His angels found wickedness*" (Job iv. 18), "*and the stars are not pure in His sight*" (Job xxv. 5), or, rather, on account of his proneness to evil from his youth (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21), not to speak of his own voluntary and sinful transgressions. The connexion seems to be this: If an earthly father, who is evil, as explained, will not refuse his son the necessities of life, will our heavenly Father, whose nature is goodness; who, "*although a woman should forget the fruit of her womb, will not forget us*," refuse His children the necessary good gifts they earnestly ask of Him? And again, if an earthly father will not give his children what they ask for, when he knows the objects of their petition to be either useless, as a *stone* in place of *bread*, or noxious as a *serpent*, in place of a *fish*, although they may earnestly seek for them, thinking them to be good, while they are really evil, how much more determinedly will our heavenly, benevolent Father withhold from us these objects of petition which He knows would be ultimately injurious to our eternal welfare? In the above reference to our Heavenly Father, and the comparison instituted, two things are conveyed. 1. That He will give us what He knows to be for our good, when we ask them as we ought. 2. That His goodness will prevent Him from lending an ear to

our petitions, when He sees, that granting them would injure us, viz., when we ask for what we imagine to be "*bread*," but, which He sees to be a worthless *stone*, He, then, will not grant it; or when we think we ask for a "*fish*," which He knows to be in reality noxious, "*a serpent*," He will, then, withhold it.

The connexion may also be this: "*Ask, and you shall receive*," provided you ask for what is necessary and expedient. For, if you ask for what He sees to be injurious; if you ask for a fish, which He knows to be a "*serpent*," this good, heavenly Father will withhold these noxious gifts, and give you something better instead, *v.g.*, if He refuse to remove temporal evils, the removal of which might injure your salvation, He will grant the greater gifts of perfect patience and sweet conformity to His holy and adorable will.

"*Know how to give good gifts to your children*." The word, "*know*," expresses custom or habit of doing a thing. Thus, it is said, "*the sun knoweth his going down*" (Psa. ciii. 19). The words of this verse (11), which are a sort of conclusion, clearly indicate the object of our Lord in introducing the example of the earthly father in the preceding verses to be—1st. That, as the earthly father gives gifts to his children, so will the heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him; and 2ndly, as the earthly father would not give noxious gifts, even when urgently sought to do so, so, neither will our heavenly Father. "*He will give (not bad, but) good things*;" or, as St. Luke has it, "*He will give the good spirit to them that ask it*" (Luke xi. 13).

TEXT.

12. *All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.*

COMMENTARY.

12. "*Therefore*," may be inductive or inferential, as if He said: All that I have said in the foregoing regarding the love of our neighbour, including our enemies, regarding alms-deeds, forgiveness of injuries, &c., may be briefly summed up in this great principle of the natural law, this leading maxim of moral philosophy, "*all things whatsoever you would*" rationally desire, by a truly Christian wish (it does not, of course, embrace corrupt, sensual wishes) "*that men would do to you*," &c. The connexion of this verse is traced by Maldonatus to c. v. 42. Besides being easily connected and aptly fitted together in sense, St. Luke, who probably observed the order and connexion in which our Redeemer spoke, connects them immediately (vi. 31).

"*For this is the law*," &c. By "*law*," is meant the Pentateuch. By "*the prophets*," all the other books of the Old Testament, whether prophetic or not. The Hebrews were wont to call the Books of Kings, the Psalms, &c., prophetic. (xi. 13; xxii. 40, &c.) The words, then, mean: This first principle of the natural law is the compendium of all that Moses and the other inspired writers have written on *the subject of fraternal charity*; or, if we understand by the love of the neighbour, the love of him for God's sake—and this alone is the true Christian idea of the love of our neighbour—then, the words will mean, that this great principle is a compendium of the entire law, new and old, since in this sense, the love of God, too, is included. The whole law is summed up in this: the love of God for His own sake, and of our neighbour for the love of God (see commentary, Rom. xiii. 8). Some commentators connect this verse with v. 1, making the intervening verses parenthetical illustrations or examples. In this verse, our Redeemer inculcates brotherly love. The fulfilling of the precept of brotherly love *adequately*, including the love of God, as above explained, is the compendium of the entire law

TEXT.

13. *Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat.*

14. *How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!*

COMMENTARY.

13. After having fully explained His law, which contained so many precepts opposed to flesh and blood, such as the love of our enemies, the contempt of earthly treasures, utter self denial, &c., like the paradoxes with which this Sermon on the Mount opens, our Redeemer employs the remainder of this chapter in earnest exhortation to all His followers to observe His commandments; and, in order to obviate an objection which might, possibly, be advanced, viz., that these precepts were very difficult of observance, and rendered the attainment of salvation very hard, He tells them that such is the case; because, the gate which opens on the road to heaven is very narrow, and the road which conducts thereto very strait, and entered on by very few; and while they needed the aid of God's grace to fulfil their duties (verses 7, 8), they must, on their part, prevented and aided by this all necessary grace, earnestly co-operate in this work of salvation. This is more clearly expressed by St. Luke (xiii 24), "*Strive to enter by the narrow gate,*" &c.

"*For wide is the gate,*" &c. The gate that opens on the road to hell is wide and spacious, and so is the road itself. Many are the paths that, from every side, lead to it. For, countless are the ways of committing sin, and of violating God's commandments. Moreover, it is so perfectly in accordance with the inclinations of our corrupt passions, and the dictates of flesh and blood, that "*many there are who go in thereat.*" St. Luke (xiii. 23) would insinuate that these words were used by our Divine Redeemer in reply to a question put to Him—"Lord, are they few that are saved?"

14. "*How narrow is the gate,*" &c. This is but a repetition, for greater emphasis' sake, of the assertion implied in the preceding verse regarding the fewness of the elect. It is the same as if our Redeemer meant to convey to us, if you wish to secure eternal life, you must enter the narrow gate, through which but few enter. You must adopt their hard, penitential life, walk in their footsteps, and carefully follow their example. In interpreting this passage, commentators and spiritual writers are greatly divided about the meaning of what is conveyed regarding the fewness of those saved. Some understand the words to mean, that taking the whole bulk of Christians and members of God's Church into account, we are to conclude, when we compare their lives with the Gospel precepts, that far the greater number are lost; and in proof of this view, they quote what they regard as the types of those who are saved and those who are lost. The 1st, is Sodom; 2nd, the Deluge; 3rd, the two who alone entered the promised land—a type of heaven—out of thousands, viz.: Caleb and Josue (Num. xiv. 30); 4th, the comparison made by Isaias (xvii. 5), of the few ears left after the mowers, and the few grapes after the vintage; 5th, the words of our Lord (c. xx.), "*Many are called, few chosen.*" St. Chrysostom (Hom. 4 ad populum); and St. Augustine (Lib. 4, contra Crescentium, c. 53), even understand the comparison to be true of Christians. Others, however, understand the comparison of mankind in general, and these hold, that the greater number of the children of the Church, the immense number who die before reaching the use of reason included, are saved; because, even the greater part of adult members of the Church are blessed with the use

of the sacraments. The words of St. Peter (2nd Ep. iii. 19, 20, see commentary on), seem to me greatly in favour of this mild opinion, which wonderfully "*exalts mercy above judgment*" (James ii. 13), and which better accords with our ideas of the goodness of God, of His will to save all, shown in the mystery of redemption and the several abundant institutions of grace. The opinion of St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom seems very harsh, and utterly improbable.

TEXT.

15. *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

16. *By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

17. *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.*

19. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.*

20. *Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.*

COMMENTARY.

15. As the way to eternal life is narrow, and the gate that opens on it difficult of entrance, and only entered by the few, one is wont to look for a safe guide on entering on such a path. Hence, our Redeemer here cautions us against trusting our destiny to the guidance of every one indiscriminately. "*Beware of false prophets.*" The word, "*prophet*," in its strict etymological sense, designates one who, under Divine influence, predicts future events. Besides this common acceptation, the Greek word, *προφήτης*, as well as its corresponding Hebrew term, *Nabi*, denotes one who, rendered conscious of the designs of God, through whatever medium, whether through visions, dreams, angels, &c., communicates, and interprets to men, these hidden designs of God, whether in regard to the past, present, or future. Thus, Genesis xx., Abraham is called a prophet; Psa. civ., "*in prophetis meis nolite malignari*" (Num. xii.); 1 Kings ix., Samuel told Saul the business he was about; Elizeus (4 Kings v. 26), told Giezi what he received from the Syrian; Christ told Nathanael secret things (John i.); Peter, to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts), &c. It denotes those who spoke unto the edification of others from knowledge divinely imparted. (1 Cor. xiv.) Indeed, St. Paul, who received his Gospel, not from man, but from the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. i.), might be said in this sense, to have acted the part of prophet in all his writings. It sometimes designates those who sing the praises of God (1 Kings x. 5). It sometimes denotes one who is rendered delirious under the influence of a wicked spirit (1 Kings xviii. 10), "*Spiritus malus Dei invasit Saul et prophetavit*," &c.

It is in the sense of teacher, or, one sent by God to instruct the people, the word is used here. The words, "*false prophets*," according to St. Jerome and others, mean heretics, propounders of false, corrupt doctrines; false teachers, who affect a mission from God which they have not, and were thus apt to mislead the people, like unto the *lying* teachers mentioned by St. Peter (2nd Ep. ii. 1). This is the meaning of the word (c. xxiv. 11), of this Gospel, also in Mark, and Luke, and Apocalypse, where it is, three different times, employed in connexion with *the beast*, and elsewhere. In these several places it denotes men pretending to an *extraordinary mission from God*.

Among the Jews, "*false prophets*" denoted men sent to oppose the true prophets of the Lord (St. Jerome).

"*Who come to you,*" self-sent, without any commission from God or His Church, like the men of whom the Lord speaks (Jer. xxiii. 21), "*I did not send prophets; yet, they ran: I have not spoken to them; yet, they prophesied.*"

"*In sheep's clothing.*" These words, although understood by some to refer to the dress of the prophets—"sheepskins"—expressive of their poverty and mortification (Heb. xi. 37), or, rather understood to be allusive to the dress of shepherds, who were generally clad in sheepskins; still, are generally understood in a mystical or metaphorical sense, of the external appearance of simplicity and truth—the characteristics of true prophets—which these men externally put on, in order to delude the people. "*But, inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" They put on all this external garb of sanctity, in order the more effectually to ruin the souls of the people, and involve them in eternal perdition, "*and draw disciples after them from the truth.*" (Acts xx. 29, &c.) St. Jerome understands the "*false prophets*" to refer to heretics, and every one knows what a sanctimonious appearance heretics generally assume, both in words and manner, in order to deceive the unwary and lead them away from the faith. Some are of opinion that in these words there is an allusion to the well known fable of the wolf in sheep's clothing. There must surely be question of those who pretend to an *extraordinary mission from God*.

16. "*By their fruits,*" &c. Our Redeemer here gives us a sign, whereby we may know these false teachers, who lead us astray from the strait path that leads to heaven, so that we may avoid them. "*Fruits,*" is understood by some commentators of their doctrine or teaching. But, it may be objected, how can one know their false teaching by their teaching? Is not this confounding the sign with the thing of which it is a sign? Moreover, might not *bad* men teach true doctrine? Did not the Scribes and Pharisees, whom our Lord everywhere denounces, sit in the chair of Moses, and teach true doctrine? The reply is, we know their doctrine to be true or false by comparing it with the doctrine of God's infallible Church; if it differ from this, it is false doctrine. Similar is the mark given by St. John of "*the false prophets*" or *Antichrists* of his day. (1 Epis. iv.) Men possessing an ordinary commission from God, through His Church, would teach true doctrine, although wicked and sinners, as did the Scribes and Pharisees; while, on the other hand, a good man might inadvertently propound, in a particular case, false doctrine. But, in case of men pretending to an *extraordinary mission from God*—and it is to these our Redeemer here refers—a safe rule, absolute and unexceptionable in every case, would be to try their teaching by the touchstone of orthodoxy—the doctrine of that Church, with which Christ promised to remain Himself (Matt. xxviii. 20), and deposit the fulness of truth through His Holy Spirit (John xiv. 16-26) to the end of ages. It seems quite clear that our Lord cannot refer to those men who receive their commission from His Church. These could not be called "*false prophets.*" Against these He would not caution His followers. On the contrary, He would tell them to obey them, and hear them. In this interpretation, which understands "*fruits*" of the teaching of men pretending to an *extraordinary mission*, the mark given will be an absolute, universal one. To it may be added the working of miracles. These are the credentials which one pretending to an *extraordinary mission* should exhibit; and the power of producing such "*fruit,*" in favour of false doctrine, God will never grant to *any* false teacher. That He refers to doctrine when speaking of their "*fruits,*" would appear probable from St. Luke (vi. 45), "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart,*" &c.

Others understand "*fruits*" to refer to their personal conduct and morals, as well as to the consequences resulting from the principles which they disseminate. This note is very commonly given in SS. Scripture (Rom. xvi. 17, 18). In this interpretation, our Redeemer conveys only a probable, a *morally* universal mark, for distinguishing teachers of error pretending to an *extraordinary* mission. Although they may affect a character for sanctity ("*in sheep's clothing*") by the external practice of prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, mortification, &c.—in themselves equivocal and employed by hypocrites to delude and impose on the unwary—and by freely, and on all occasions, employing certain maxims apparently redolent of holiness; still, it is morally impossible that such men could perseveringly wear the mask without detection, and lead a continuous life of sanctity. Sooner or later, they shall exhibit the concealed wolf, in their own wicked actions, and the sad consequences of their teaching. This is borne out by the whole experience of Church history. The history of all heresiarchs, and the influence of their teaching, both in regard to civil and ecclesiastical authority, furnish the most lucid commentary that could be brought to bear on this passage.

Both these interpretations may be united; and it may be fairly said, that, "*their fruits*," the mark by which the "*false prophets*"—the unsent teachers, "*who come*" of themselves, not sent by God—may be distinguished, embrace, first, their teaching at variance with the unchangeable doctrines revealed by God, and deposited in the safe keeping of his Church; secondly, their own personal morals, combined with the consequences of the principles they disseminate. They may, no doubt, announce some true doctrines, even redolent of sanctity. They may also perform certain good works, and practise externally, certain virtues, and have always ready at hand certain maxims of piety, and phrases calculated to mislead the unwary, and thus they will appear "*in sheep's clothing*." But, in regard to *doctrine*, their teaching, taken as a *whole*, shall not be free from grievous errors; and, in regard to their *morals*, the *body* of their actions shall, in the main, be found far short of what a Christian life ought to be; and some of their principles shall produce consequences involving the subversion of all authority, civil and ecclesiastical, as history too truly testifies. The "*sheep's clothing*" in which they first appear, for the purpose of more easily devouring the flock, will, in course of time, disappear; and then it will be seen what they really are. Some commentators (among whom is Jansenius), "*by fruits*," understand their conduct, and their works, not such as are equivocal, and may be practised by hypocrites to deceive, when they appear "*in sheep's clothing*," such as fasting, alms, &c., but their works of the flesh, referred to by St. Paul (Gal. v. 19). These, viz., "*dissensions, envies, contentions*," &c., shall accompany them, and thus show their true character, as "*charity, peace, joy*," &c., shall be a mark of good teachers.

These men, "*coming*" of themselves, unsent by those vested with the ordinary authority of governing the Church, whom our Lord commanded all to hear, and whom He vested with the plenitude of power to rule and govern the Church, should produce the credentials of their *extraordinary* mission, viz., miracles; and these as being the seal of God Himself, shall never be granted by Him to false teaching or a false mission, without counteracting and opposing them by greater miracles, stronger evidences of truth. This He owes to His own Divine veracity. It should be always borne in mind, that in speaking of "*false prophets*"—the very term was calculated to remind the Jews of what their fathers suffered from that wicked class—our Redeemer does not refer to those who have an ordinary commission from His Church, but to those pretending to an *extraordinary* mission, and for these alone the mark given in verse 16 is intended.

"*Do men gather figs of thorns?*" &c. In Luke (vi. 44) it is, "*figs from thorns, and*

grapes from a bramble bush." The meaning is the same. The metaphor, or rather parable, referred to in the word, "*fruits*," is illustrated in these words. They are meant to convey the *moral* impossibility, if there be question of *conduct*; or, the *absolute* impossibility, if there be question of *faith*, for heretics or the false teachers in question, to produce permanently the wholesome, profitable "*fruits*" of faith or good works, in the sense already explained.

17. A further illustration. These words are read in St. Luke (vi. 42) immediately after the words, "*Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye,*" &c., as in verse 5 of this. The intermediate words, written by St. Matthew here, were probably used by our Redeemer, as St. Luke is more brief in his narrative; and the causal particle "*for*," used by St. Luke, "*for there is no good tree*" &c. (verse 43), shows that he connects this parable of the good and bad tree with *hypocrites*, and St. Matthew here does the same. For, there are no greater hypocrites than the "*false prophets*," in connexion with whom St. Matthew here introduces the illustration.

"*Even so.*" This is consequent on the implied comparison in the preceding verse. As one cannot gather grapes of thorns, &c., "*So, also, every good tree,*" &c. The word "*tree*," refers to fruit-bearing trees; it also includes *bushes*. By "*a good tree*," St. Augustine understands, *a good will*. But, it more probably refers to men or teachers; for, it is to illustrate what is said of them the example is used; and, moreover, it is said (verse 19), they shall "*be cast into the fire*;" and St. Luke says, "*a good man*," &c. (vi. 45). The words of this verse, understood of men, are literally true of the good man, the good teacher, or, "*every good tree.*" Such a man shall produce good fruit, both as regards faith and morals, in the sense already explained. "*The evil tree*," likewise, "*evil fruit.*" The body of his teaching, and of his conduct, taken as a whole, shall be bad, although he may perform some good actions, and announce some truths; but, taken in its entirety, the fruit shall be bad. In order to be bad, it is not necessary that one be so in every thing or in every respect. "*Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex minimo defectu.*"

18. "*A good tree cannot yield bad fruit,*" &c. May not a bad man do some good works? Maldonatus, in reply, says, he *cannot* do so *naturally*; it is not in his nature to do so. And he *cannot*, in the sense that he *does* not do so always or *ordinarily*; as a good man does not ordinarily do bad works. According to others (among whom Jansenius Gandavensis) the meaning is, it *cannot* be that all, or the chief and principal fruits of a good man would be bad; on the contrary, they must be good; as happens, on the other hand, in regard to the bad teacher, all, or his principal acts, cannot be good, so that by *some* fruits he may be distinguished or discerned from the good. This is the rule for distinguishing teachers—"igitur, ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos." For, as "*they come in sheep's clothing*," their teaching and conduct must be externally good in *some* things. Our Redeemer did not give *all* their acts as a test or criterion for judging of them. This also appears from St. Luke (vi. 45), "*A good man, out of the treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good.*" But, He does not say, he *always* does so. So, in like manner, the wicked teacher must sometimes bring forth from "*the abundance of his (wicked) heart*" fruits by which he might be safely judged and discerned. From the false nature of their doctrine, in *some* points at variance with the SS. Scriptures and the unchangeable teaching of the Church, they are proved to be false teachers; and, as it is not of teachers deriving their *ordinary* commission from God's Church, there is question here, but only of men pretending to an *extraordinary* mission, inspired by the Holy Ghost, this mark is given,

their wicked life proves them not to be inspired by the Holy Ghost. With regard to those who come, commissioned by the Church, teaching what they learned from the Church, and acquired by study, and not by any extraordinary inspiration from God, it is not from their lives they are to be judged as teachers, but from their teaching, as far as it is in accordance with the doctrine of the Church.

Others understand the word, "*cannot*," in *sensu reflexo*; inasmuch, as he is bad (*quatenus malus*), he cannot produce good fruit.

19. "*Every tree*," &c. These words, which refer to the punishment of evil-doers in *general*, and of false teachers in *particular*, show, that by tree is meant, not the *will* of man, as St. Augustine explains it; but, man himself, who is the subject of punishment. This verse may be regarded as parenthetical.

20. "*Wherefore*," since a good tree produces good fruit, &c., "*by their fruits you shall know them*." This is an inference from the foregoing, having reference to *teachers* only, and to teachers pretending to an *extraordinary* mission, as already explained. It is not meant for ordinary teachers.

It should be borne in mind, with reference to the foregoing example of the good and bad tree, that it is introduced by way of parable, and that every property of an example of this sort can never be applied to the subject it is intended to illustrate; otherwise, in the present case, man would be regarded as devoid of free will; nay, of animal life, as a tree is gifted with neither. The extent of the application is regulated by the scope or object of the parable.

TEXT.

21. *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

22. *Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name?*

23. *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.*

COMMENTARY.

21. Some commentators (Jansenius, &c.) say, there is a transition here from treating of false prophets, and the marks whereby they may be distinguished, to the faithful in general; and this is rendered probable by the reading in St. Luke (vi. 46), "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*," as if our Redeemer, after having carefully cautioned them against being led astray by false teachers from the path of the true faith, now points out the necessity for all, not alone of professing the true faith, but, also, of performing good works, and observing God's commandments, so that true faith shall not avail, nor the repeated invocation of God's name, without observing His law. Others hold, that this is a continuation of the former subject; that there is no transition at all; and that our Redeemer continues to show, that neither preaching, nor the invocation of the name of God, is among the fruits whereby they may be known, since many who invoke God, shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, if they do not faithfully observe His commandments. The words are used in the second person by St. Luke, "*why call you*," &c. It may be that our Lord used these words on two different occasions, and in the way recorded by both Evangelists. St. Matthew records what He said of the false prophets in *particular*; St. Luke, of His hearers in *general*.

"*The will of my Father.*" Our Redeemer, when speaking of the Divine will, speaks of His *Father's* will, as if conveying that to His Father, *by appropriation*, He attributes the office of Legislator, and that of Divine Legate to Himself. This might be also more agreeable to His hearers, although Father and Son are both equal in all things. Certain qualities are, *by appropriation*, attributed to each of Three Persons of the adorable Trinity, although *common* to the Three Persons who possess the same Divine nature and attributes. In Luke it is, "*the things which I say,*" which shows the will of both to be the same. The word, "*Lord,*" is repeated, "*Lord, Lord,*" for emphasis' sake, and to show the fervour of invocation, as, in next verse, its repetition indicates affright and terror.

"*The kingdom of heaven,*" *i.e.*, of heavenly glory, the meaning of the words, when joined to the word, "*enter*" (Maldonatus). Here, He speaks of entering into *heaven*, not by words, but by deeds. Moreover, it is clear from the following, that He is speaking of the rewards to be given not in the Church, but in heaven, from which some are to be excluded, "*on that day.*"

The will of His Heavenly Father includes, faith and love, with good works, according to the words of St. John (1 Ep. iii. 23), "*And this is His commandment, that we should believe . . . and love one another,*" &c.

22. "*In that day,*" the Lord's own well-known tremendous day of General Judgment, to which all look forward, when the kingdom of heaven shall be revealed. In this verse, our Redeemer adduces a still stronger illustration of the necessity of good works, as well as of faith, to insure an entrance into the kingdom of God's glory. Even those who were favoured with the gift of prophecy and miracles, and possessed strong faith, shall be excluded.

"*Lord, Lord.*" The repetition here is expressive of the terror and affright into which they shall be cast, on seeing their doom about to be sealed for ever. "*In Thy name.*" by Thy power, and authority, granted to us. "*Prophesied,*" according to some, means, explaining the SS. Scripture, as the result of the inspiration of the moment, and teaching the people, as in. (1 Cor. xiv. 2, &c.) Others understand it of the faculty of predicting future events. "*Cast out devils,*" "*and done many miracles.*" *i.e.*, many *other* wonderful manifestations of Divine power. In these words, our Lord in general expresses what He had been expressing in detail in the preceding, regarding prophecy, casting out devils. In this verse there is, most likely, question of true miracles and prophecy; otherwise, if there were question of false miracles performed by diabolical agency, our Redeemer's argument would not hold, which is, that good works are so necessary for gaining an entrance into the kingdom of heaven, that even the highest supernatural gifts, such as prophecy, or the faculty of working miracles, shall not avail without them. On the subject of miracles, whether they can be performed by Satan, and on the proof of truth which miracles furnish, see Murray's, Very Rev. Dr., "Annual Miscellany," vol. ii., for a splendid and exhaustive dissertation.

23. "*And then,*" hitherto I patiently dissembled my wrath and bore with them, waiting for them in mercy. But, "*then,*" when the reign of justice commences, "*I will profess,*" publicly proclaim, in the presence of the entire human race congregated together.

"*I never knew you,*" not even at the very time you were performing wondrous works through the power I gave you, and while apparently doing my business. "*Knew,*" by a knowledge of love and predilection. The word, "*know,*" has

frequently the meaning of *loving, approving, &c.*, as in 2 Tim. ii. 19. I did not know you, as my friends, my children, whom I predestined unto glory; I did not love you, because you did not practise what you preached. You omitted doing the will of my Heavenly Father.

"*Depart from Me,*" &c. These words seem to be a quotation from Psa. vi. 9, where the same words are used in the person of David. They correspond with the words to be addressed in judgment to the reprobate, "*Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire,*" &c. (Matt. xxv. 41.) "*That work,*" the present tense, signifies, that they were engaged during life, and persevered, without repentance, unto the end, in performing wicked works, which is expressed by St. Luke (xiii. 27), "*ye workers of iniquity.*"

TEXT.

24. *Every one therefore that heareth these my words, and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock.*

25. *And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock.*

26. *And every one that heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand,*

27. *And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.*

28. *And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine.*

29. *For he was teaching them as one having power, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees.*

COMMENTARY.

24. "*Every one, therefore, that heareth these my words,*" &c. This conclusion, "*therefore,*" would favour the interpretation of those who, in our Redeemer's words, at verse 21, see a transition from treating of the marks of false prophets, to treating of the necessity of good works for all men in general. Here, the same idea would seem to be conveyed in different words, by means of a very striking similitude, which could not fail to make a lasting impression on all His hearers, and bring the important truth of which He was treating, home to their minds. In verse 15, our Redeemer treats of the necessity of true faith, free from the admixture of error, conceived from false teachers. In this verse, He shows the necessity of good works, of fulfilling God's precepts, by a very striking illustration. *Hearing* His words, will not suffice. "*Not the hearers of the law are just before God*" (Rom. ii. 13). *Doing* them also is necessary; "*but the doers of the law shall be justified.*" Besides faith, good works are necessary for justification. This dogma of faith is clearly laid down in this eloquent and beautiful similitude of our Divine Redeemer.

"*These my words,*" refer as well to the discourse just delivered by our Redeemer, as to all His words in general.

"*Every one, therefore,*" as if to say, to conclude, *then*, and briefly illustrate all I have been saying regarding the necessity of good works for "*every one,*" without exception, as well teachers as those taught.

"*A wise man,*" a prudent, provident man.

"*That built his house upon a rock.*" These words may be accommodated to the spiritual sense intended to be illustrated by our Redeemer in this way: The man who not only believes, but observes God's commandments, has placed the whole structure and tenor of his life on a most solid, unshaken foundation, viz., upon the observance

of the Evangelical doctrine of Christ. Having intimately received the doctrine of Christ in the very bottom of his heart, and minutely examined its depths, its promises and threats, present and future, he is founded on a firm hope, and never shall be shaken by the storms of temptation, from whatever quarter or direction they may proceed, whether from *above* ("rains"), or *below* ("floods"), or *laterally* ("winds"); whether from the world, represented and denoted by the *rains* descending and enriching the earth—an emblem of swelling ambition and love of riches—the *flesh*, denoted by the flood, coming forth from the bosom of the earth—or, the *devil*, the chief of these airy spirits, that descend from all sides, these Princes of the power of the air who wage a fiendish war with mankind. The words may be also allusive to that dreadful day when the heavens and earth shall be moved out of their places (Isa. xxviii. 2; Psal. xlix. 3; Wisd. v. 18). On that day, the man, who *doeth* the words of Christ perseveringly and persistently, shall not be moved, but "*shall stand in great constancy against those who afflicted him*" (Wisd. v. 1).

25. "*The rains,*" &c. The different elements denote the different kind of assaults, from above, beneath, and laterally—assaults from all directions. They are differently explained or applied by the Fathers. Most likely, the "*rains*" descending from on high, irrigating and fertilizing the earth, denote the love of wealth and honours, whereby the *world* allures men and turns them aside from the ways and service of God. "*The floods,*" arising from the bowels of the earth, denote the temptations arising from man's own flesh. "*The winds,*" invisibly rushing on the house from all sides, denote the *devil*—"the (*subtle*) spirit of wickedness in high places," "*the Prince of the powers of the air.*"

26. "*Every one who heareth His words and doeth them not, shall be like a foolish man,*" &c. The same is true of the man who *neither hears nor does* His words.

27. "*And great was the fall thereof.*" "*Great,*" entailing damnation which is *irreparable*, which is to last unchangeably *for ever*. No other conceivable ruin so great or deplorable.

28. "*In admiration.*" The Greek word means, *to be in transport*, or struck with astonishment, "*at His doctrine.*" So new, Divine, and heavenly, hitherto unheard.

29. "*Having authority,*" not like the Prophets of old, who only delivered the commands of God, "*Hec dicit Dominus.*" He does not employ any form of words, implying that He was a mere legate. He employs the form, "*Sed ego dico vobis,*" "*and not as their Scribes and Pharisees,*" who merely gave expression to the traditions of men (xxiii. 23), and perverted the sense of Scripture, in their private interpretation. As regards their *public* capacity, as "*sitting in the chair of Moses*" (see c. xxiii. 2). Moreover, He did what the Scribes, &c., dare not do, viz., as Legislator—" *Sed ego dico vobis*"—He added to and corrected the law itself. He also confirmed His doctrine by miraculous wonders. The words may also refer to His manner of delivering His discourse, with a holy zeal, energy, and earnestness proceeding from the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANALYSIS.

St. Matthew describes in this chapter a twofold miracle performed by our Lord on coming down from the mountain, whereby He confirmed the doctrine recorded in the three preceding

chapters. By a mere touch of His hand, He cures a man covered all over with a loathsome leprosy and, after curing him, He tells him what to do (1-4). He next cures the servant of a Centurion, and takes occasion, from the great faith of this Gentile centurion, which He highly eulogizes, to predict the call of the Gentiles and rejection of the Jews (5-13). The Evangelist, in the remainder of this, c. viii. and c. ix., records events which occurred *before* the Sermon on the Mount, and which, in the order of narrative, should be placed at the end of c. iv. He describes the perfect cure of Peter's mother-in-law, who was very ill in fever (14-15), the cure of demoniacs, and of men afflicted with other maladies, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah regarding Him (16-17). He gives instructions, in order to avoid the crowds, to cross over to the opposite, or eastern, shore of the Lake of Tiberias (18). We have next given the reply of our Lord to two men who were desirous of attaching themselves to Him. He cautions the one against expecting that in His service he has anything else to expect save poverty and privation (19-20). The call He gives the other was so urgent that He refuses him permission to go home and bury his father (21-22). While crossing the lake, our Lord being asleep, the disciples, in terror of their lives, awake Him, and He at once calms the raging hurricane, which created a feeling of wonder in those who witnessed the miracle (23-27). We next have a description of the cure of two fierce demoniacs, in the country of the Gerasens, where our Lord landed (28-29); and the chapter concludes with an account of the entrance of the dispossessed demons into a large herd of swine, that precipitated themselves headlong into the sea, on which account, the unhappy Gerasens wished our Lord to leave their country (30-34).

TEXT.

AND when he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him :

2. *And behold a leper came and adored him, saying : Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

3. *And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying : I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed.*

4. *And Jesus saith to him : See thou tell no man : but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.*

5. *And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him,*

6. *And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.*

7. *And Jesus saith to him : I will come and heal him.*

8. *And the centurion making answer, said : Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof : but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.*

9. *For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers ; and I say to this, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

10. *And Jesus hearing this, marvelled ; and said to them that followed him : Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel.*

11. *And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

12. *But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

13. *And Jesus said to the centurion : Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. And his servant was healed at the same hour.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And when He was come down from the mountain.*" According to St. Luke (vi. 17), if we suppose that he and St. Matthew record the same discourse, the preceding discourse was delivered, not on the mountain top, but "*in a plain place,*" which may be easily understood, of a level plain on the mountain's side, where the multitude heard it, after our Redeemer had previously descended from the top of the mountain (Luke vi. 17). The words mean : When our Lord had delivered the preceding discourse, in the level plain on the mountain's side, in presence of the

multitude, He came down to the foot of the mountain and wished to go elsewhere. "*Great multitudes*," influenced by the heavenly discourse they were after hearing, and by the miracles they saw Him perform (Luke vi. 18), "*followed Him*." St. Matthew having omitted what was supplied by St. Luke, relative to the circumstances of this discourse, and particularly the previous descent of our Redeemer into the plain, where He delivered the discourse to the multitude, now records His descent to the foot of the mountain, into the low country, where the miracles, now about to be recorded, were performed. St. Matthew omits (c. v. 1) what St. Luke records, or, rather, supplements (c. vi. 17), and he now records His descent from the mountain altogether, which St. Luke, who makes no mention of His descent to the foot of the mountain, omits. The opinion of Maldonatus, who holds that the preceding discourse, given in chaps. v. vi. vii., is composed of several discourses delivered, on different occasions, by our Lord, is refuted (c. v. 1, which see).

2. "*And behold a leper*," &c. "*Behold*," conveys, that this occurred immediately after His descent from the mountain. St. Luke (vi.) and St. Mark (i.) describe this miraculous cure of a leper in almost the same words employed here by St. Matthew. Hence, commentators agree that the three Evangelists refer to the same occurrence; the order of time and place, circumstantially detailed here by St. Matthew, is the one commonly adopted. The two other Evangelists do not so minutely describe the order of events, as St. Matthew does. "*A leper*." St. Luke (v. 12) describes him as "*full of leprosy*," covered all over with it. The Jewish law (Lev. xiii. 46), as well as the general usage of mankind, for sanitary reasons, prevented men afflicted with this loathsome and contagious disease from associating with their fellow-men. Hence, when St. Luke says (c. v.), this cure took place "*in a certain city*," it means, close by, or, in the suburbs of, a certain city, most likely, Capharnaum.

There are several passages in SS. Scripture, where, *in a place*, signifies, *close by it*. Thus, in Scriptural usage, our Lord's Passion is said to have happened *in Jerusalem*, because it occurred on a mountain *close by it*. Also (Heb. ix. 4), the urn of manna is said to be in the ark, although only *alongside* of it. (Josue x. 10; Judg. xviii. 12, &c.) It is held by some, that *lepers* were not prevented by the law of Moses from entering cities, but only from *dwelling* in them; and that leprosy, if contagious at all, which is denied by many, was not communicated by mere touch. For, the priests came constantly in contact with lepers. Hence, in order to prove dangerous, it was necessary to live with lepers and breathe the same air with them. In Leviticus (xiii. 12) we find, that if a man were entirely covered, all over his body, with leprosy, he would be regarded as clean, as if the disease in such a case were working itself out. Lepers, though excluded from the Jewish places of residence, were not excluded from the Christian churches. St. Matthew and St. Luke may be reconciled by saying, our Lord met the *leper* in the streets or entrance to Capharnaum. St. Matthew's account may be so understood. In truth, he does not mention the precise place where the miracle was performed.

"*And adored Him*," with supreme adoration due to God alone. (St. Mark (i. 40) describes him as "*falling on his knees*." St. Luke (v. 12), as "*falling on his face*," which is plainly indicated by the words of the leper: "*Lord, if Thou wilt*," &c., a clear profession of faith in our Lord's omnipotent power; as if he said: Thou needest not have recourse to any other power external to Thyself; Thou needest not employ any appliances of the healing art. By a mere act of Thy will, a simple word or wish, Thou canst effect the desired cure.

The leper here illustrates the prayer recommended by St. James; he "*asks in faith, nothing wavering*" (Jas. i. 6). "*Qui voluntatem rogat, de virtute non dubitat*" (St. Jerome, *in hunc locum*). As leprosy was but a type of sin, those who feel the dreadful curse of sin should have recourse to Jesus Christ, and, like the leper, cry out, with undoubting confidence in the Divine goodness and power, while availing themselves of the means of remission instituted by Him, "*Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.*"

3. Our Lord, at once answering to his petition, shows He has the will as well as the power; and instantly cleanses him. The ceremony of touching him with His hand, while a mere word or volition would do, had for object, as we are informed by St. Chrysostom (Hom. 26 in Mattheum), to show, that He was above the ceremonial law, which forbade coming in contact with lepers (although the existence of such a law is denied by some, as we shall see hereafter), and that nothing could be impure in regard to Him, who was the source of purity; and that, far from being rendered impure by contact, the Divine touch of the flesh of the adorable Word rendered clean everything it touched. The example of Eliseus (4 Kings iv. 34) touching the dead child, would show that the works of Divine power were above ritualistic observances, as in the case of the touch of a dead body.

4. Our Redeemer here inculcates three precepts or lessons—1st. Of *humility*; "*see thou tell no man.*" 2nd. Of *obedience*; "*go, show thyself to the priest.*" 3rd. Of *gratitude*; "*offer the gift which Moses,*" &c.

"*See thou tell no man,*" &c., may mean, see thou tell no one until *first* thou shalt show thyself to the priest; lest, on learning the miraculous cure from rumour, before they pronounced him clean, the priests would refuse to certify it; and thus, furnish some pretext for rejecting the miracle. Hence, in promulgating it, the leper did not afterwards violate the mandate or the prohibition, which had principally for object to teach men a lesson of humility, by avoiding all vain ostentatious display, as Tertullian understands it (Lib. 4, contra Marcionem), and by concealing, as much as possible, unless where the glory of God requires the contrary, their virtuous actions. This our Lord sanctions by His own example (Mark v. 37-40; vii. 23; ix. 1), and when afterwards publishing the miracle (Mark i. 45), the leper, most likely, did not regard the words of our Lord as strictly mandatory in the literal sense, but as given only from a feeling of humility, on our Lord's part.

"*But, go, show thyself to the priest.*" St. Mark has (i. 44), "*to the chief of the priests,*" which may refer to the priest, who, in his turn, presided over the other priests then on active duty in the temple. Or, it may be, that the Jewish High Priest reserved to himself the declaration regarding cleansing from leprosy.

"*Offer the gift,*" a lamb; in case of poverty, two turtles, or two young pigeons (Lev. xiv. 13-21).

"*Which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*" If the word, "*testimony,*" be joined to "*commanded,*" then, the words mean, that Moses commanded such gifts in the case of cleansing from leprosy, as a statute or law, to be enforced by the priests. The law is often called "*a testimony*" in SS. Scripture. Others connect it with the word, "*offer,*" and, then, it means; present the prescribed gift, the acceptance of which by the priests shall be a *testimony*, or public authentic recognition on their part, of the truth and reality of the miracle; or, it may mean, it shall render them inexcusable, and prove as a *testimony* against them, in case they hereafter reject and

calumniate our Redeemer, whose miraculous works they recognize ; or, accuse Him of being an enemy of the law, whose observance of the law they themselves could bear witness to.

"*Unto them,*" *i.e.*, the entire sacerdotal order, meant by the word, *priest*, taken in a distributive sense. Others understand it, of the Jewish people. The former is the more probable. It may, possibly, refer to both priests and people. If the man did not show himself to the priests, they would probably reject the miracle, and hold him still legally unclean, and liable to be excluded from human society. It would serve as a testimony, and would promote God's glory to witness the miracle, says St. Jerome (*in hunc locum*), whether they believed or not. If they believed, they would themselves be saved and cured from the criminal leprosy of sin ; if they believed not, then, they would be inexcusable, in not rendering testimony to truth ; and convicted of injustice for having accused Him of being an enemy of the law. In either case, God's glory would be advanced.

5. The probability is, that the preceding miracle was performed *near*, or in the *suburbs* of, Capharnaum, or in some town on His way from the Mount. The narrative of St. Luke and St. Matthew may be very easily reconciled, if we suppose the cure of the leper to be performed on His entrance into Capharnaum. The narrative of St. Matthew, referring in this verse to "*when He had entered Capharnaum,*" admits of this interpretation and mode of solution.

"*There came to Him a centurion.*" The time, place, and other circumstances would seem to render it clear, that the miracle here recorded is the same as that mentioned by St. Luke (c. vii.) The trifling diversity in the narrative of both Evangelists is easily explained, and both are easily reconciled. When St. Luke says (c. vii. 3, &c.), he sent some influential friends, "*the ancients of the Jews,*" to our Redeemer ; that He went with them, and when near the house the centurion sent his friends to meet Him, and through them addressed Him, all this presents no discrepancy whatever in regard to what St. Matthew records here, as it may be said, with truth, that a man himself says, what he says through others, or employed others to say for him. The Greek commentators (St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, &c.) say, the words of St. Matthew ought to be understood literally, that the elders of the Jews, on behalf of the centurion, *first* accosted our Lord (as St. Luke says) ; that when the centurion found that our Lord Himself meant to come, he sent his friends, who addressed Him, as is recorded by St. Luke (vii.) ; and that then the centurion himself finally met Him quite close to his house, and addressed Him, as is mentioned here by St. Matthew.

6. "*Servant.*" St. Luke has "*my slave*" (δουλος). But, the word here employed (παῖς) may mean, either a boy or a slave. Hence, it means, "*a boy slave,*" much prized by the centurion, as St. Luke informs us.

7. "*I will come,*" &c. These words were addressed to "*the ancients of the Jews*" (Luke vii. 3). It is deserving of remark, and has been frequently observed by interpreters, that when there is question of a poor slave, our Redeemer goes to visit him in person, although his master, the centurion, did not ask Him ; but in the case of the Ruler's son, He cures him only at a distance (John iv. 50).

8. "*Lord, I am not worthy,*" &c. These words the centurion commissioned his friends to express in his name as our Lord was approaching his house ; and hence, he expressed them *through others*. Or, if we adopt the interpretation of St. Chrysostom,

they may have been personally uttered by the centurion himself, on seeing the Redeemer approaching his house.

"*Only say the word*," a Hebrew phrase, signifying, *only command it*; only express a wish, and it shall be well with my afflicted servant. It would appear from St. Luke, that, in the first instance, when the centurion employed the mediation of the Jewish ancients, he wished Him to come. Now, his faith is increased and enlightened, as Jesus approaches his house; and he unhesitatingly proclaimed His omnipotence.

9. "*Under authority*," means, as St. Luke expresses it, "*subject to authority*," a subordinate, subject to higher officers, captains or generals. "*Having soldiers under me*." This he says not out of vain ostentation, but to show why his commands are obeyed. The conclusion, which may be regarded as, an *argumentum a minori ad majus*, so expressive of the great faith of the centurion, is: If I, a mere man, myself subject to others above me, can command my subordinates, and by my mere word, ensure a ready compliance and obedience from them, how much more canst Thou, who art Sovereign Lord of all things, subject to no one, having no one over or above Thee, command diseases and bodily infirmities, and by Thy mere word, insure the most perfect obedience and compliance with Thy wishes, "*Mare et venti obediunt ei*."

10. "*Marvelled*," *i.e.*, expressed wonder at this external manifestation of faith, which may be explained, consistently with our Lord's omniscience, as St. Thomas explains it (3 Part, q. 15, Art. 18), thus; although, in virtue of His Divine omniscience, our Lord knew the faith of the centurion already, and, moreover, could not be ignorant of it, as it was He Himself that inspired the centurion by His heavenly grace; still, He really and interiorly marvelled, owing to the experimental knowledge of the fact; just as the astronomer, who predicts an eclipse, expresses his admiration and astonishment on witnessing it actually taking place. Others, with St. Augustine, &c., understand the word to convey the mere external expression of His praise, and commendation of it; and of astonishment, as evidenced by His whole external appearance and countenance. It may, probably, also, denote the expression of commendation conveyed in the following words: "*Amen I say to you*," &c.

"*In Israel*," the Jewish people, the depositaries of God's oracles, favoured with His special graces and revelations. In the Greek it is more expressive still (*ουδε εν τω Ισραηλ*), "*neither in Israel*." From this, it would appear that the centurion was a Gentile, a Roman soldier. Our Redeemer says, He did not find such faith, as was shown by a Pagan soldier, among the carnal descendants of Abraham. In this, He did not surely refer to those who, from the very nature of things, and the well-known evidence of facts, were excepted, such as the Blessed Virgin, John the Baptist, the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles, as when speaking of the Baptist He says, "*No greater arose among the born of women*." Nor, of course, did He include Himself. Or the words may be confined to the period of His public mission; since He began to preach publicly and work miracles, He found no such instance of faith in the mass of the Jewish people in general.

11. "*And I say to you*," &c. The centurion being a Gentile, as clearly appears from the contrast, "*in Israel*," as also from the words of the ancients of the Jews, "*He loveth our nation*" (Luke vii. 5), our Redeemer takes occasion, by way of digression, to refer to the vocation of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews—a subject referred to by the Prophets in many places, but especially by Isaias (xliii. 5, 6, 10)—after which digression, He resumes the subject of the centurion's appeal.

"*That many*," attracted by God's grace, like the centurion, "*shall come from the East*," &c., from the four quarters of the globe, and the remotest regions of the Gentiles—the Gentiles may be called, "*many*," compared with the Jews—"and shall sit down with Abraham," &c., the Patriarchs, the three great Princes of Israel, and fathers of the spiritual sons of promise, to whom were first made the promises of eternal bliss.

"*Shall sit down*," is allusive to the recumbent posture in which the ancients partook of their banquets—a fit emblem of the bliss they shall, one day, fully enjoy, in supreme security and rest. Our Redeemer, in accordance with a Scriptural usage, represents the eternal bliss of the saints, under the figure of an earthly banquet.

"*The kingdom of heaven*," conveys an idea of the joys of that blessed country in which the saints shall enjoy God for ever and ever.

12. "*The children of the kingdom*." The natural descendants, according to the flesh, of the Patriarchs, born in Judea, which was a type of heaven; and as they had a claim to the type, it would seem but natural, that they had a claim to the thing typified also. And, in truth, the Jews seemed to claim the spiritual inheritance of justification which conducted to heaven, as a kind of hereditary birthright transmitted to them, as sons of Abraham (vide Ep. ad Rom.) To them, the Gospel of the kingdom was first preached.

"*Exterior darkness*." The words are found in St. Matthew only, here and in c. xxii. 13; xxv. 30. They have, undoubtedly, reference to the darkness of hell, that land of misery and darkness, where everlasting horror dwells. "*Darkness*," also conveys the idea of a close prison (Psa. cvi.; Isa. xlix.). "*Exterior*," according to some interpreters, is allusive to the metaphor of the banquet, which in the East, usually took place at night. Within the banquet hall, was a profusion of lights; without, darkness. Everything outside the banquet hall was darkness, compared with the brilliancy which reigned within. In hell, there is physical darkness. The damned are also deprived of the light of God's beatific vision, said to be hell's greatest torment. According to these, the words mean: They shall be cast out of God's bright kingdom, outside which there is but darkness. Others, seeing the word, "*exterior*," to be used (c. xxv.), where there is no allusion to a feast, interpret "*exterior darkness*," to mean, darkness of the densest kind in that deep and profound abyss, which is situated outside the brightness of this world, under or within the earth, where the light of the sun never reaches. Others, take the word in a superlative sense, to mean the densest darkness, farthest off from the brightness of God's kingdom and the light of His glorious effulgence.

"*Weeping and gnashing of teeth*." These words, used by St. Matthew, not only here, but also in chapters xiii., xxii., xxiv., xxv., and once by St. Luke (xiii), are explained by some to denote the extreme cold and heat of hell; the latter producing "*weeping*;" the former, "*gnashing of teeth*." St. Jerome, in his commentary on Job, as also on St. Matthew (x.) seems to hold this opinion, for which there is some foundation, in the words of Job (xxiv. 19). The meaning of the words of Job is, however, questioned by others. Hence, the matter is uncertain. (See Jansenius, c. xlv.) Maldonatus holds that there is real weeping &c., in hell. A. Lapidé maintains, there is real gnashing of teeth, but not real weeping or shedding of tears; and St. Jerome, taking the words literally, infers from them, the resurrection of the body. The words mean, excessive pain, rage or horror; the former, indicated by the word, "*weeping*;" the latter, by the words, "*gnashing of teeth*." Even

profane authors refer to the torture of dying soldiers, who were afflicted with "stridor dentium."

13. "Go"—a Hebrew form of expression, implying that his request was granted—go home, in a joyous mood, "*and as thou hast believed,*" that in virtue of my Divine power, I could, although absent, cure thy servant, "*so be it done to thee.*" "*In that hour,*" i.e., at the very instant Jesus told him to go home, conveying, that He had granted his request.

TEXT.

14. *And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying, and sick of a fever.*

15. *And he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to them.*

16. *And when evening was come, they brought to him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word: and all that were sick he healed.*

17. *That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet Isaias, saying, "He took our infirmities, and bore our diseases."*

COMMENTARY.

14. The two preceding miracles were performed by our Redeemer, *after* delivering the Sermon on the Mount. The following miracle and all the events recorded in the remaining portion of this and in the ninth chapters, took place *before* the Sermon on the Mount, as appears from the other Evangelists. This appears clear also from the fact, that our Redeemer had, previous to the sermon, selected the twelve Apostles, of whom St. Matthew was one. Now, the Apostle relates, in c. ix., his first call to be one of our Redeemer's disciples previous to his adoption into the Apostolic college. Hence, the remainder of this chapter, together with c. ix., should have been, in due order, inserted at c. iv. 22.

"*And when Jesus was come into Peter's house,*" &c. From Mark (i. 22, &c.), and Luke (iv. 32, &c.), it appears that our Redeemer, after having called Peter and Andrew (Matt. iv. 18), entered Capharnaum; and after having preached in the synagogue and having cured a demoniac, He went to the house of Peter.

"*Peter's house,*" is said by some to be the house of his mother-in-law, called "*Peter's,*" because, whenever he came from Bethsaida, his native place (John i. 44), to Capharnaum, he most likely stopped there. It is also called "*the house of Simon and Andrew*" (Mark i. 29), as, probably, both stopped at the house of Peter's mother-in-law when at Capharnaum. Some say it refers to the house of Peter's father at Bethsaida, which was but a short distance from Capharnaum. It is, however, clearly inferred from St. Mark and St. Luke, that the miracle took place at Capharnaum. St. Mark (i. 33.) says, "*all the city was gathered together at the door.*" He spoke of no other city, save Capharnaum. St. Luke says (iv. 38), "*Jesus rising up out of the synagogue, went into Simon's house,*" which shows it was in the city or near it. Most likely, our Redeemer went there, for the purpose of taking food, as the hour for dining had arrived. (St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, &c.) It is called "*Peter's house,*" as it was his, formerly, before he left all to follow Christ.

"*His mother-in-law.*" Peter is the only one of the Apostles of whose marriage we have any Scriptural record; and if others among them were married, they ceased cohabiting with their wives, "*Ecece reliquimus omnia.*" "*Sick of a fever.*" It seems she was very ill, as St. Luke (iv. 38), calls it, "*a great fever.*"

15. "*And He touched her hand.*" St. Mark, "*He took her by the hand*" (i. 31);

St. Luke (iv. 39), "*standing over her*" i.e., close by her, inclining towards the sick bed, "*He commanded the fever,*" i.e., in a menacing, authoritative way, He commanded the fever to leave her, "*and she arose* (St. Luke adds, '*immediately*') *and ministered.*" Physicians tell us, and it is known from experience, that persons, on their immediate recovery from fever, are very weak. Peter's mother-in-law was perfectly restored and vigorous. Her serving them at table shows, therefore, that her cure was at once complete and miraculous.

16. "*When evening was come.*" St. Luke says (iv. 40), "*when the sun was down.*" The cure of the demoniac in the synagogue, and of Peter's wife, which occurred on the Sabbath day (Mark i. 21; Luke iv. 31), had excited the attention of the Jews, who, however, before bringing their sick to Him, waited for the evening and the setting of the sun, when, according to the Jewish computation of their feasts, which was from evening to evening (Lev. xxiii.), the Sabbath was over, as they considered it unlawful to have any work performed on the Sabbath. Hence, as the Sabbath was over at sunset, they bring their sick and infirm to Peter's house, where He tarried, to be cured by Him. How many spiritual cures have been performed, even to the present day, in *Peter's house*, which is God's holy Church. In mentioning the lateness of the hour, the Evangelist, probably, wishes to convey, that our Lord heeded not any inconvenience, whenever an opportunity presented itself, of doing good. "*Possessed with devils,*" shows actual real possession; otherwise, the whole account would be illusory. The expulsion of those wicked spirits, proved the superior power of Christ.

17. "*That it might be fulfilled,*" &c. "*That*" which is the same as "*so that,*" denotes the *consequence* or *effect*. The effect of these cures, was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias (liii. 4). The Prophet in this passage, refers to sins primarily. But, he also refers to corporal diseases, as the manifest effects and clear types of sin. The Jews, themselves, regarded these diseases as the punishment of sin; and our Redeemer, when curing bodily diseases, usually premised with saying, "*Thy sins are forgiven.*" The cause is first removed, and then the effect or punishment. Hence, as the Prophet referred to sin and its punishment, the words of Isaias have a double fulfilment in the removal of bodily distempers, and the remission of sin in consideration of the future merits of Christ. Theologians generally hold, that, the words of Isaias are applied by St. Matthew here, *in sensu accommodatio*. The Socinian argument, who confine the prophecy of Isaias to the removal of bodily distempers only, is fully answered by a reference to St. Peter, who (1 Ep. ii. 24), interprets the words of Isaias (liii. 5-12), of the remission of sin, and the satisfaction paid for it on the cross. So that whatever interpretation may be given of Isaias (liii. 4.), here quoted by St. Matthew, it is certain, that verses 5-12 of that chapter refer to the atonement for sin by the sufferings of Christ on the cross.

St. Jerome has rendered the original Hebrew of Isaias thus in the Vulgate: "*Vere languores nostros ipse tulit et dolores nostros ipse portavit.*" These words, viewed as referring to *sin*, will mean: He bore our sins as to imputability, and He endured on the cross the sorrows and tortures we should be enduring for all eternity, if He had not graciously vouchsafed to become a *vicarious* offering in our stead. Viewed in regard to *corporal diseases*, as applied here by St. Matthew, the words will mean, "*He took*" our infirmities, not in the sense, that He took upon Him these corporal diseases, which would not be becoming for Him, and would prevent His ministry, although He submitted to the common infirmities of our nature not unbecoming Him,

such as hunger, thirst, lassitude, &c.; but, in the sense, that He took them *away* from the people, by healing them, a meaning which the Greek, ελαβε, and the corresponding Hebrew word, *nasa*, often bears. Similar is the phrase, "*qui tollit peccata mundi*." "*And bore our diseases*." While sympathizing with the sick, He bore their sorrows, as St. Jerome renders it, *dolores nostros*, by removing their diseases. St. Paul uses the word, "*bear*," to signify sympathy. "*Alter alterius onera portate*." The word, "*portavit*" (*bore*), may mean, not taking on oneself, but taking *off* another, and lightening his burden, in which sense the Hebrew word, *sabal*, as well as its cognate word, *nasa*, "*auferre*" is taken. (*Vide* Forerius in *Isaiam* liii.) Hence, the words, as referring to bodily diseases, mean, "*He took our infirmities*," *i.e.*, He took them *away*, by curing us of them; "*and He bore our diseases*," not on His own shoulders; but, He lightened on us this load of diseases under which we were groaning, and carried them *off* elsewhere from us. The Septuagint for "*infirmities*," is, *αμαρτίας*, *sins*.

TEXT.

18. *And Jesus seeing great multitudes about him, gave orders to pass over the water.*
 19. *And a certain scribe came and said to him: Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou shalt go.*
 20. *And Jesus saith to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.*
 21. *And another of his disciples said to him: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*
 22. *But Jesus said to him: Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.*

COMMENTARY.

18. Wishing to avoid the crowds, whom the fame of His miraculous cures had attracted to Him, thus leaving us an example of disregard for human applause, He gave orders to cross to the opposite or eastern shore of the Sea of Tiberias. Mark (i. 35), and Luke (iv. 42), say, He left Capharnaum early in the morning, and went to some desert place to pray; and there the crowds found Him, and in order to avoid them, He gave orders to cross to the opposite or eastern shore of the lake. There is some apparent difference in the order in which the following events are recorded by SS. Mark, Luke, and Matthew. Interpreters are generally agreed that the arrangement adopted by St. Matthew is the correct one. The two other Evangelists describe these events as having taken place without any reference to the precise order in which they occurred. Indeed, the very form of expression used by them would clearly indicate, they meant to narrate the events as having occurred, some time or other; while St. Matthew is particular in detailing the very order in which they occurred.

19. When our Redeemer was on His way to the lake, which He was soon to cross, this scribe or doctor of the law, of his own accord, offered to become one of His constant followers. St. Hilary reads the words interrogatively, "*Master, shall I follow Thee?*" &c.

20. Our Redeemer, without either accepting or refusing his offer, and seeing the interested views by which he was very probably actuated (as interpreters of Scripture and the holy Fathers, generally, infer from the words addressed to him by our Redeemer), tells him if he expected in Christ's kingdom, worldly glory, or wealth, he was greatly mistaken. Similar was His reply to the mother of the sons of Zebedee (xx. 22), and the young man mentioned (xix. 21).

"*The foxes*," animals which, far from being protected, are hunted down by man.

"*The birds of the air*," which seem to be utterly careless about any provision for themselves, subsisting solely on the chance pittance which Providence throws in their way. Some of the Holy Fathers interpret these words mystically, as denoting the man's cunning and dissimulation, represented by the word, "*foxes*;" his pride and boasting, by "*the birds of the air*;" others suppose the scribe to be sincere in his offer, and they take the words of our Redeemer not to imply insincerity, but to indicate the difficulties and privations to be largely shared in by His constant followers.

"*The Son of man*," a child descended from the first man, Adam (Barradius) Ezechiel, who was a type of Christ, was called so, also, by the Angels, who addressed him. These words indicate the great humiliation and self-denial of our Redeemer in the mystery of His Incarnation. Although "*Son of God*," He vouchsafed, for our sakes, to become also *the Son of* (sinful) *man*, to assume all the common infirmities of human nature (its corruption and sinfulness excepted); and, all who wish to be partakers of His plentiful redemption, must, like Him, endure crosses and privations. This is implied in the words of our Redeemer to the scribe in question.

21. "*Another of His disciples*," who was one of His disciples, or who was to be one hereafter. All the disciples of our Lord did not attach themselves to Him constantly. Thus, we see, Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of our Lord; but, occult, from fear of the Jews. The same is probably true of the man in question. And now, he is invited to become a constant follower of our Lord. This man, whose chief drawback, as far as we can gather from this passage, was, that he seemed to have rather too much sensibility in regard to natural ties and human affections, was pressed by our Redeemer to forego the pious duty of burying his father, the urgent call to follow Christ being one of still more imperative necessity. Some commentators considering our Redeemer's refusal to grant so short a space of time for discharging a natural and religious duty, a corporal work of mercy, to be rather harsh and apparently opposed to that spirit of kindness He always displayed, think, the father of the young man was not dead at all, but only in extreme old age. So that the young man meant to ask to be left with his aged father till he closed his eyes and performed the last offices dictated by filial piety. However, from the following words, it seems more probable, the father was actually dead; and our Redeemer must have seen, from the peculiar circumstances of the case and person, good reasons, unknown to us, for urging his immediate compliance, without any delay whatsoever.

22. "*Follow Me*." From St. Luke (ix. 59), it would appear, the words of the preceding verse (21) were spoken by the disciple in reply to our Redeemer's invitation. Hence, the words of this verse contain a second call to follow our Lord, uttered after the disciple begged to be allowed to go and bury his father. In truth, the words of v. 21 would imply that our Lord asked him to follow Him. And now, the word, "*follow*," is repeated in this verse a second time.

"*Suffer the dead*," i.e., those who are dead in infidelity and sin, "*to bury their dead*," i.e., whose souls are, by death, separated from their bodies. Hence, the word, "*dead*," bears a different signification in both cases. In the first place, it means, spiritually dead—"suffer the dead"—who are only concerned about the present world, and never think of following Christ; in the second, "*to bury their dead*," those corporally dead. St. Luke (ix. 60), says, our Lord added, "*but, go thou and preach the Kingdom of God*." From these words of St. Luke, we see that if two incompatible duties occur, we must attend to the more necessary and important. The duty of

"preaching the kingdom of God" and ministering to the necessities of the soul and concerns of spiritual life and death, being a spiritual work, should be attended to before the performance of a corporal work of mercy, such as ministering to the necessities of the body and the concerns of this life.

St. Luke states (ix. 61), that our Redeemer rejected, with a sharp rebuke, another, who before following Him, wished for some time to settle his temporal affairs; or, rather, to take leave of his friends and domestics, telling him impliedly, that by "*putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, he became unfit for the kingdom of God.*" From this, we can easily see, with what undivided care, a minister of the Gospel must devote himself to the exclusive discharge of his spiritual duties, without embarrassing himself with temporal matters, save in as far as they subserve the spiritual and eternal interests, which frequently does occur. "*No man, being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with worldly business.*" (2 Tim. ii.) No doubt, this is universally true, and should be ever attended to by the ministers of religion; and to every good minister of religion, it is a cross, and a great source of annoyance, to be placed in circumstances, where temporal, political, and other worldly matters become a matter of duty, in defence of the rights of the Church, of his own people, of Christian education, &c. But, however annoying and irksome, they still become a duty, especially in a country like ours. Woe to those men, who, out of love of ease or Pharisaical affectation of superior sanctity, and detachment from the world, or from the corrupt motive of catering to the prejudices of the great, and of thus becoming accepted partakers of their bounty, by inglorious indolence and love of ease, betray the rights of the Church, the best interests of religion, and the permanent, enduring interests of civil society.

From the preceding verses (20-22), we can clearly see the dispositions which should animate all those who wish to enter on the Gospel ministry—1st. Disinterestedness; 2ndly. A generous promptitude in obeying the higher Divine call, to be retarded by no obstacles, no considerations of other duties, however urgent or plausible.

TEXT.

23. *And when he entered into the boat, his disciples followed him.*

24. *And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but he was asleep.*

25. *And they came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish.*

26. *And Jesus saith to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up he commanded the winds, and the sea, and there came a great calm.*

27. *But the men wondered, saying: What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?*

COMMENTARY.

23. "*His disciples followed Him*" into the ship, to cross the lake with Him.

24. "*A great tempest.*" The Greek word "*σεισμος*," generally signifies an earthquake; but in Luke viii. 25; Mark iv. 37, the word used is *λαλαψ*, which denotes a hurricane. All lakes bounded by mountain ranges are subject to such.

"*But He was asleep.*" This was a natural sleep, brought on by our Lord's own voluntary act, with the view of showing His human nature, and that He was subjected to its ordinary wants; and also, of showing His own power, of testing the faith of His disciples, and of confirming it, by a display of His Divine power. This

boat, as indeed does the whole passage, in a mystical sense, represent God's holy Church, through every phase of her chequered history.

St. Chrysostom tells us (Hom. 23, in Mattheum), that the sea represents the world; the wind and storm, the attempts of evil spirits, and wicked men, to upset the Church. The sleep of our Lord, while the hurricane was raging, reminds us that, sometimes, He permits persecution, and other trials, to assail His Church, to such a pitch of violence, as to threaten her utter destruction, which, no doubt, humanly speaking, they would long since have compassed, only that the Almighty helmsman, when fervently invoked by His suffering children, awakes from His sleep, allays the storm, restores tranquillity in His own good time; and, after testing the faith and heroism of His followers, scatters her enemies, humbling them to the dust, and showing how little human malice, or human strength, can prevail against the never-failing promises of an Almighty and Infinitely veracious God. Never, perhaps, did a more violent hurricane assail the Church of God, never did the enemies of God, devils, and their wicked instruments, the powers of this world, combine, with more apparent success, to swamp the vessel of God's Church, than at this moment. But the children of God know on whom they have to lean. They have unbounded confidence in the midst of the storm, which assails them. They have Him on board, whom "*the sea and the winds must obey*," who, by a single fiat of His will, can at once destroy their enemies. Relying on His promises, and holy protection, they never cease to cry out, with the firmest confidence of being finally heard, "*Lord, save us, we perish.*"

25. "*We perish.*" We are on the very point of perishing, and of being lost.

26. "*O ye of little faith?*" This He probably said *before* the miracle, as St. Matthew, who is careful to observe the order of events, records it, although Mark and Luke say, it was *after* it. This excessive fear, which St. Mark tells us (iv. 38), made them imagine that our Lord was utterly unconcerned for them, shows how weak their faith was. They had on board the Lord God, whose Divine eye never sleeps. The suddenness of the storm, or, as the Evangelists express it, of the hurricane, which overtook them, utterly bewildered them; so that they hardly knew what they were about. They were not long accustomed, at this time, to the converse of our Lord; and, hence, it was no wonder, that the dreadful danger that they were in, should have caused such fear.

"*He commanded.*" The Greek word means, to *command authoritatively*. St. Mark (iv. 39), gives us the form of command used. "*Peace, be still.*" While His sleep indicated His humanity, this miracle proved His divinity. God alone can command the elements; according to the words of the Psalmist, "*Thou rulest the power of the sea, and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof*" (Psa. lxxxviii.); also, "*He said the word, and there arose a storm of wind, and the waves thereof were lifted up,*" &c. (Psa. cvi. 25.) The words of this verse are strongly figurative, and expressive of the sovereign power of our Blessed Lord over all creation, animated and inanimate.

"*And there came a great calm,*" without a vestige of the storm remaining. This shows the reality of the miracle. For, after a great storm, and commotion of the waters, the waves also continue, for some time, in a state of agitation, and the sea never becomes suddenly calm, save in case of a miracle, as here.

27. "*The men wondered.*" This may refer both to the disciples and to the men who manned the boat, as well as to those in the other boats which accompanied them across (Mark iv. 36). It may also include the multitudes on the shore.

"*What manner of man is this?*" He must be surely, something even more than we regarded Him. He has worked greater wonders than Moses or any other. The very elements are obedient to His will. It need hardly be observed, that the whole occurrence which took place, while our Redeemer and His disciples were crossing the lake, was clearly typical of the future condition and circumstances of God's holy Church, and never more so than at the present moment (A.D. 1876).

TEXT.

28. *And when he was come on the other side of the water, into the country of the Gerasens, there met him two that were possessed with devils, coming out of the sepulchres, exceeding fierce, so that none could pass that way.*

29. *And behold they cried out, saying: What have we to do with thee, Jesus Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*

COMMENTARY.

28. "*Of the Gerasens.*" There is a diversity of manuscript readings here. Some Greek copies have "*Gadarenes*;" others read, "*Gergesenes*."

"*Two*" men. St. Mark v. 2; Luke viii. 29, without denying that there were two, speak only of *one*, either because this one was more remarkably fierce, and savage than the other—and Mark and Luke only meant to narrate the substance of what took place—or, because only one fully appreciated the blessing conferred on him, and wished to follow our Divine Redeemer (Luke viii. 38). The two Evangelists describe the wretched condition of this demoniac, to show the malice of the demons, and the great power of our Lord.

"*Coming out of the sepulchres.*" It was required by the law of Moses, that the sepulchres should be built outside the cities, towns, and villages. They were constructed in the shape of vaults, of such size as to allow several persons to enter them. These wretched men were impelled by the cruel demons to take up their abode, in these dismal, lonely places, far away from any intercourse with men. Probably, the superior power of our Lord compelled these demons to bring their wretched victims to meet Him, so as to have His power and mercy displayed in their regard.

29. "*They cried out.*" After our Lord, as Mark (v. 8); Luke (viii. 29) tell us, had ordered the demons to go out of the bodies of the possessed.

"*What have we to do with Thee, Jesus Son of God?*" The Greek, "*τι ημιν και σοι*," can hardly be literally translated, so as to bear any intelligible meaning. Hence, the above translation is rather explanatory than literal. "*Quid nobis et tibi.*" These words must be interpreted, according to circumstances. They generally, and perhaps, always, convey the idea of obsecration, entreaty, or remonstrance. Here, probably, they mean—As you command us to give up the possession of these men, we ask, what have we done to Thee, thus to torture us, and exercise Thy power over us? What have you to say to us, or we to you in this matter? We only torment sinners. We have nothing to do with Thee, the Son of God, who art infinite sanctity, incapable of sin.

"*Art Thou come hither before the time to torment us?*" Some of the fallen spirits were dragged down with infernal ropes to the lower hell (2 Peter ii.; Jude i.); others were permitted at large, to dwell in the air, and on the earth. Hence, called the "*Prince of the powers of the air*" (Eph. ii.); "*Spirits of wickedness in high places.*" (Eph. vi.) It is the opinion of St. Thomas (1 P. q. 64, Art. 4 ad 3), and of others, that wherever they are, they carry the torments of hell fire about them, God so

arranging it, by His infinite power, that the fire of hell would act on them at a distance, not to speak of the pain of loss. These haughty spirits were tortured by the very presence of Christ, as St. Jerome tells us (in Matth. viii.) Moreover, in their pride, they would regard it as an aggravation of the infernal torture they were already enduring, to be expelled by a Superior Power, and be sent, before the time, to the infernal abyss (Luke viii. 31), into which they are finally to be cast, or driven out of the country (Mark v. 10), perhaps into some desert region. They would thus, be deprived of the fiendish pleasure of injuring the earth, by causing storms, sterility, diseases, and of tempting mankind. It may be, that while at large, roaming through earth and air, they suffer less than when confined to hell.

"*Before the time,*" i.e., before the Day of Judgment; after which they were to be cast into the abyss. They were afraid that our Redeemer was anticipating the Day of Judgment, to cast them into the depth of hell.

"*To torment,*" means, increase, aggravate the tortures they were already enduring.

"*Jesus, Son of God.*" Most likely, at this time, the devil knew Him, from the several miracles and wonders He performed, to be the Son of God, although he may have doubted it at the temptation. (c. iv.) St. Luke (viii. 29) says—"When he saw Jesus, he fell down before Him," rendering Him, from compulsion, Divine adoration, "*credunt Demones et contremiscunt.*" The words of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii.), prove nothing to the contrary. St. Paul does not say, the devils did not know Christ to be God. He only says, they were ignorant of the *economy of redemption*, and the consequences of His death. For, it is not clear, they would not, out of sheer malice and hatred, have crucified Him, even though they knew Him to be Son of God. (See Commentary, 1 Cor. ii. 8.)

TEXT.

30. *And there was, not far from them, a herd of many swine feeding.*

31. *And the devils besought him, saying: If thou cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine.*

32. *And he said to them: Go. But they going out went into the swine, and behold the whole herd run violently down a steep place into the sea: and they perished in the waters.*

33. *And they that kept them fled: and coming into the city, told every thing, and concerning them that had been possessed by the devils.*

34. *And behold the whole city went out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart from their coasts.*

COMMENTARY.

30. *And there was, not far from them.* The Greek reading is affirmative (*μακρὰν*, "*a great way off*"). But the Vulgate reading, "*non longe*," is, most likely, the correct reading; both because it is found so in all old and modern Latin codices, in all ancient interpreters, except Euthymius; as also, because it accords better with Mark and Luke. The former says, "*near the mountain*" (c. v. 11); Luke (viii. 32), "*on the mountain*," which was at hand. Both those readings are easily reconciled, inasmuch as the herd, being very large, "*about two thousand*" (Mark v. 13), some of them were *on* the mountain; more of them, "*near*" it.

31. The devils asked for three things—1st. Not to be cast into the abyss of hell. 2nd. Not to be sent out of the country, where, from their acquaintance with the

dispositions of the people, they could do much mischief, and more effectually act on their known tendencies. 3rd. To be allowed to enter the herd of swine, in case they were cast out of the bodies of the two men possessed. They were very numerous. Their name was Legion (Mark v. 9). The reason why the devils wished to enter the swine is supposed to be, to create indignation among the people at the destruction of their property, and thus cause them to reject our Redeemer's ministry. The event justified their anticipations. They, moreover, desired to show their hatred of man, by the injury done him in his property, as they were not permitted to do injury to persons.

32. "*Go.*" There can be no doubt, that our Lord, as Sovereign Master of all things, could, in virtue of His high dominion, permit this destruction of property; and as He had, undoubtedly, in view in this act, besides God's glory, to succour man's spiritual necessities, it is not to be wondered at, if so many of these animals are destroyed to succour man's *corporal* wants, that a few, on this occasion, would be destroyed to succour his *spiritual* and more urgent necessities. Several reasons are assigned by interpreters why our Lord permitted the demons to enter the swine. 1. To spread abroad the miracle of the expulsion of the devils from those possessed. 2. To show the number of the demons; and, that they can do nothing without the Divine permission; also to show their malignity, and how they would torture and destroy men, if God permitted them. Some commentators say, our Redeemer permitted the destruction of the swine to punish those who kept them, and exposed themselves to the danger of partaking of swine's flesh, contrary to the law of Moses. However, the law of Moses, nowhere prohibits the Jewish people from feeding swine for the purposes of traffic, or any other purposes than the eating of them. Moreover, although this district was formerly possessed by the half-tribe of Manasses and the tribe of Gad, whence some call the city *Gadara*; still, as it was on the confines of the Gentiles, it is not unlikely many Pagans tended swine, who could use swine flesh without sin, and who might be the lawful owners of the herd in question. And it is expressly stated by Josephus (Lib. de Bello, cap. 2), that the district beyond the Jordan was inhabited by Jews and Syrians conjointly. Our Lord might also have in view, to meet the errors of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits, and of future Rationalists, who denied the personality of demons, and said, that in these several possessions, there was question of mere diseases. For, by what propriety of language could the Evangelists say, "*they,*" i.e., diseases, "*going out, went into the swine?*"

"*The whole herd.*" St. Mark tells us, they amounted to "*about two thousand.*"

The entrance of the demons into the herd of swine, in a mystical sense, shows what a fit habitation for unclean spirits are the bodies of the unchaste, who wallow in the mire of uncleanness, of which the swine are a fit emblem.

"*Into the sea,*" i.e., the Sea of Galilee, of which there was mention in this chapter.

33. The swineherds, terrified at what they saw, "*told everything,*" and especially regarding the cure performed on the men who were possessed by devils.

34. "*The whole city,*" i.e., a great number of citizens, moved, probably, from curiosity, went out to see one, of whose miraculous wonders they heard so much.

"*Besought Him,*" &c. This was, probably, dictated by a fear of any further temporal disaster. Influenced by a fear of temporal loss, they wished to forego the blessing of His presence among them, who had performed so many wonders in favour

of the possessed. Hence, proving unworthy of His presence, our Lord, unwilling to cast the priceless pearl of His Holy Word and ministrations before swine, left their country, and recrossed the lake.

CHAPTER IX.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of the miraculous cure, by our Lord, of the man sick of the palsy, on whom He first bestows the remission of his sins. This the Pharisees made the occasion of charging Him with blasphemously arrogating to Himself what belonged to God alone; whereupon our Redeemer, in proof of the doctrine He enunciated, performs the miracle, and perfectly cures the sick man (1-7). The people were seized with reverential awe in consequence, and gave glory to God (8). We have next an account of the call of St. Matthew, which was promptly responded to; and of the entertainment given by him to our Lord, at which many of his associate publicans were present (9-10). From this the Pharisees took occasion to accuse our Lord of associating with sinners. On hearing this, our Lord meets the charge by referring to the relation of physician, which He held towards sinners—men spiritually sick, whom He came to cure, and with whom, therefore, He ought to associate. He next confutes them from their own Scriptures, in which mercy was so strongly inculcated (12-13). The Pharisees, having put forward the disciples of John, to insinuate a charge of self-indulgence against our Lord while accepting entertainments, He refutes this charge, by saying that the time had not yet come to subject His disciples to the rigours of fasting (15); that the rigours of fasting were, as yet, *untimely* for His Apostles—the time for it would come afterwards (15); and, moreover, *unsuited to them*, in their present state, which He illustrates by examples (16-17). We have next an account of the woman, who, for a long time, suffered from an issue of blood: and of the resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus (18-25), the fame of which spread rapidly through the entire district of Galilee (26). On His way to Jairus' house, He gave sight to two blind men, who, on leaving Him, find a demoniac, whom they bring to our Lord, by whom the poor sufferer is cured (27-33). Stung with malevolence and envy, the Pharisees ascribe these wonderful cures to diabolical agency (34). Regardless of their calumnious charge, our Lord goes about the entire country, preaching the Gospel, and confirms His doctrine by several miracles. He takes compassion on the destitute spiritual condition of the people, and tells His disciples to pray for good labourers to be sent into the harvest, now ripe for the sickle (35-38).

TEXT.

AND entering into a boat, he passed over the water and came into his own city.

2. *And behold they brought to him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

3. *And behold some of the Scribes said within themselves: He blasphemeth.*

4. *And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts?*

5. *Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say, Arise and walk?*

6. *But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said he to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.*

7. *And he arose, and went into his house.*

8. *And the multitudes seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men.*

COMMENTARY.

1. *And entering into a boat,* &c., either the one in which He came across, or, the ferry-boat, "*He passed over the water,*" i.e., recrossed to the western side of the lake, whence He had come shortly before. "*His own city,*" not Bethlehem, the place of His birth, nor Nazareth, where He was brought up, either of which, on these grounds, might be called "*His own city,*" but Capharnaum, which He selected as the place of His constant abode (Matt. iv. 13). It was the capital of Galilee, which He rendered illustrious by many miracles.

St. Jerome understands it of Nazareth. In this interpretation, we must suppose, that all our Redeemer did at Nazareth, are passed over by the Evangelist, and that he begins to narrate what He did on His return from Nazareth to Capharnaum. For,

St. Mark (ii. 1) clearly asserts that the following miracle occurred at Capharnaum; and the word, "*behold*," (v. 2), would indicate that the miracle was wrought immediately on His arrival at the city in question, which, St. Mark says, was Capharnaum.

2. "*And behold they brought to Him one sick of the palsy*," &c. Both Mark (v. 21) and Luke (viii. 41) would seem to say, that immediately on our Lord's return, He was entreated by the chief ruler of the synagogue to restore his daughter, who was on the point of death. However, the order of events, as is here recorded by St. Matthew, is the most probable; for Matthew, Mark (ii. 14), and Luke (v. 27) agree in stating, that our Lord called St. Matthew after the cure of the paralytic; and on the occasion of the banquet given to our Redeemer by St. Matthew, a question having arisen as to why our Lord's disciples did not fast, like the disciples of John, He assigns the reasons why they did not. "*And as He was speaking these things*" (ix. 18), the ruler came and spoke about his daughter. Now, this was subsequent to Matthew's call, which occurred after the cure of the paralytic; hence, the cure of the ruler's daughter was subsequent to that of the paralytic, and the order of events, as narrated by St. Matthew, the real one. The cure of the ruler's daughter occurred some days after our Lord recrossed the lake, when He was on some occasion engaged "*nigh unto the sea*" (Mark v. 21).

"*They brought to Him one sick of the palsy*," &c. St. Mark (ii. 3, &c.) says, "*he was carried by four*" porters; Luke (v. 18) says, "*in a bed*;" and, being unable to make their way to our Redeemer through the dense crowd, they mounted the flat roof of the house by outer stairs (in Judea the houses had flat roofs), and uncovering it over where He was, they let the sick man down in the bed whereon he was carried.

"*Their faith*." The porters showed their great faith in having recourse to such extraordinary means, and such trouble to have the man brought to our Lord. St. Chrysostom says, the faith of the man himself is included, which was shown by his allowing himself to be thus carried, and likely he himself was the first to ask to be brought to Jesus. But, no doubt, the faith of the others is chiefly referred to, as influencing our Lord to bestow on this man corporal health, which they asked, and to grant even more than they asked, viz., health of the *soul* also; just as He cured the centurion's servant, on account of the faith of his master (viii. 13). In granting blessings, God has regard to the prayers and faith of others, as well as of those on whom He confers them. The recipient, however, should oppose no personal obstacle.

"*Faith*," here signifies a firm belief in our Lord's great power; as, also, a great confidence, that in His goodness and mercy, He would restore the sick man to bodily health, which resulted from faith in His Almighty power.

"*Son, be of good heart*." Most likely, the poor invalid was dejected. (The account given by St. Luke (v. 20) is substantially the same as this.) Hence, our Lord desired to inspire him with still greater faith and confidence.

"*Thy sins are forgiven thee*." Our Lord, first, removes the cause of the bodily illness, under which this afflicted man laboured, viz., his sins; and then, afterwards removes the effect, i.e., bodily illness. This proves the man himself must have faith; but, no doubt, the faith and charity of the others greatly assisted him, and moved our Lord to grant him a true contrition for his sins, without which they could not be forgiven. Hence, St. Ambrose, contemplating the effects of intercessory prayer, says, "If you despair of the pardon of your grievous sins, employ intercessors, have recourse to the

Church, whose mediation influences God to grant the pardon, which He might refuse yourself personally."

3. "*Said within themselves*," thought; without expressing it, as is clear from next verse.

"*Blasphemeth*," by arrogating a power which belongs to God alone, as is expressed by the other Evangelists (Mark ii. 7; Luke v. 21), "*Who can forgive sins but God only?*"

One is guilty of blasphemy against God in two ways—1st. By speaking impiously of Him, attributing to Him what is unworthy and unbecoming His infinite dignity, or denying to Him what belongs to Him. 2ndly. By ascribing to creatures what belongs to God alone, and thus derogating from the Divine honour, in which sense the word is taken here.

4. "*Seeing their thoughts*," in virtue of His Divine omniscience, thus proving Himself to be God, to whom alone it belongs to be the searcher of men's hearts; and thus He proves on their own very showing, that, as God, He had a right to remit sins. The words are more express still in Mark, "*Jesus presently knowing in His spirit*," &c., as if he said, unlike the Prophets, who knew things from God's inspiration, our Lord knew, at once, what was passing in their minds of Himself, without any aid from others.

"*Evil in your hearts*," because they rashly judged Him to be guilty of blasphemy, who had given so many proofs of piety towards God; and this they did, not from zeal for God's glory, but from malevolence. They might have readily asked our Lord to give reasons for what He said, if they were not actuated by malevolence towards Him.

5. Although our Lord had already given a sufficient refutation of their wicked judgment, and had shown, by His disclosing the thoughts of their mind, that He could, as God, remit sins, still He has recourse to further arguments to prove the same.

"*Whether is easier, to say*." According to the holy Fathers, and especially to St. Augustine (Tract. 72 in Joannem), it is more difficult to remit sin and justify a man, than to create heaven and earth. Hence, "*easier*" means, as regards the exposure to detection in case of failure. Although, in reality, the remission of sin be almost infinitely more difficult, and for its accomplishment requires a far greater effort of power than to restore a paralytic to perfect health; still, it is "*easier*," in regard to detection in case of fraud, or should one fail in it, to command one than the other, because, the cure of a sick man is a thing which falls beneath the senses. One may have ocular demonstration of the cure of a palsied man; not so, however, in regard to the remission of sin, which is invisible, and cannot admit of external proof. It is deserving of remark, that our Redeemer does not say, "*whether is easier to remit sin, or to cure a sick man?*" but, "*whether is easier to say*," or *command* one or the other. The words mean: so far as the public detection of fraud and external proof are concerned, which is easier or less liable to refutation in case of failure, what I have just now done, viz., to *command with effect* ("*to say*") thy sins are forgiven thee, or, "*to say*," and *command* effectively, what I now mean to do, for this afflicted man, "*arise and walk*." It was for what He *said* the Pharisees charged Him with "*blasphemy*," which consists, not in acts, but in *words*. Jansenius holds, that, taking into account the mode in which the cure of the sick man was effected, viz., by sole command, and in a way altogether divine, one was just as easy as the other; because, both must come from

God, with whom all things are equally easy; and hence, if He does one, He cannot be charged with blasphemy for claiming the power to do the other.

6. To show that He had the power of remitting sin, which He claimed and exercised, He appeals to the miracle of curing the sick man, not that He meant to prove the power of doing a more difficult work, viz., the remission of sin, from the power of doing what was in reality less difficult, viz., the cure of the sick man; but, from the miracle He wishes to show that the doctrine it was adduced to prove was true, viz., His assertion that He had the power to remit sin; because, God would never allow a miracle, which is, as it were, His own divine seal, to be wrought, in confirmation of false doctrine, without exhibiting a conflicting miracle of a stronger and more decisive character.

"*That the Son of man,*" who appears among you so lowly, whom you accuse of blasphemously arrogating to Himself the power which belongs to God alone, "*hath the power,*" which He claims, not coming from anyone else, but from Himself, "*to forgive sins,*" not only in heaven, but on earth.

("Then He said to the man sick of the palsy.") These being the words of the Evangelist, are read parenthetically. Our Lord, as man, has the power of remitting sin, not ministerially, like the priests, on whom this power was conferred by Almighty God, "*whose sins you shall forgive,*" &c., but authoritatively and meritoriously, in virtue of His death, which made expiation for sin.

"*Arise, take up thy bed,*" a clear proof of his recovered strength, "*and go into thy house,*" so that thus all who met him could testify to the miracle.

7. This shows how perfect the miracle was. St. Mark (ii. 12) says, "*he went his way in sight of all.*"

8. "*Feared.*" The Greek word, *θαυμασον*, means, "*marvelled,*" i.e., they were struck with reverential awe. The same is more clearly expressed by Mark and Luke. This was on the part of the people; but, most likely, the Pharisees are not included, who always cavilled at, and misconstrued, the miraculous works of our Divine Redeemer.

"*Such power,*" i.e., the power of remitting sin and confirming it by miracles. "*To men.*" The analogy of number is quite common in all languages. Gave such power to Christ, or "*to men,*" for the good and benefit of men. The use of the plural for the singular is quite common, both in Scriptural and classical writers, particularly when speaking of kings and princes (1 Kings).

TEXT.

9. *And when Jesus passed on from thence, he saw a man sitting in the custom-house, named Matthew; and he said to him: Follow me. And he rose up and followed him.*

10. *And it came to pass as he was sitting at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came, and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.*

11. *And the Pharisees seeing it, said to his disciples: Why doth your master eat with publicans and sinners?*

12. *But Jesus hearing it, said: They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill.*

13. *Go then and learn what this meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." For I am not come to call the just, but sinners.*

COMMENTARY.

9. "*When Jesus passed on from thence,*" i.e., where He cured the paralytic, towards the sea side, as St. Mark states (ii. 13).

"*Sitting in the custom-house.*" Most likely, a table or booth where the tolls for merchandize, exports and imports, were received. This was, likely, on the borders of the lake, on which the boats plied hither and thither.

"*Named Matthew.*" The other Evangelists, Mark (ii. 14), Luke (v. 27), call him "*Levi*," out of consideration for St. Matthew, "*Levi*" being a name less known in connexion with the odious occupation of *publican* or tax gatherer. He calls himself, out of humility, "*Matthew*," the name by which he was more commonly known as *publican*. Hence, from the same feeling of humility, in giving the name of the Apostles, he calls himself "*Matthew the publican*" (x. 3). He may have had both names, a thing not unusual among the Jews; or, perhaps, his name, before his call, was Levi, and our Lord may have given him that of Matthew. Under this latter name, he was more commonly known since his call to the Apostleship.

"*And He said to him: Follow me.*" Shows the goodness and clemency of our Redeemer, who, having called poor ignorant fishermen already, now disdains not to call one whose profession was a by-word of reproach among the Jews.

"*Followed Him,*" promptly obeyed the Divine call, having either witnessed or heard of the many splendid and undoubted miracles performed by our Divine Redeemer. St. Jerome (*hic*) remarks also, that a certain effulgence and majesty of occult divinity shone in the face of our Redeemer, capable of attracting all who came in contact with Him, as the magnet attracts steel.

10. "*In the house,*" Matthew's house (Mark ii.; Luke v. 29). The Evangelist does not expressly declare this, out of a feeling of humility, as it was calculated to exalt him, to have the privilege of entertaining our Lord at his house, hence he expressly refers to what tended to lower him, viz., the occupation of "*publican*" (verse 9). "*Many publicans.*" Matthew's former associates. "*Sinners.*" Either Jews who led loose, dissolute lives, regardless of the law of Moses, and lived after Gentile fashion, and possibly were excommunicated and cast out of the synagogue; or Pagans, who may have been stopping at Capharnaum. These "*came*," either at Matthew's invitation, or of their own accord, attracted by our Lord's power, and influenced by Matthew's example.

"*And sat down with Jesus,*" &c. St. Mark (ii. 15), speaking of our Lord's disciples, adds, "*for they were many, who also followed Him,*" to the house of Matthew. St. Luke, speaking of St. Matthew, says (v. 28) "*And leaving all things, he rose up and followed Him.*" How he could have done this consistently with his having entertained our Lord afterwards, as is recorded here, at his house, is explained differently by different commentators. Some say, "*leaving all,*" must be said by anticipation, of the period, when, having settled his affairs, shortly after his call, he gave up all. In the interim, he entertained our Lord at his house. Others understand it of his having, at once, given up all his occupations, as publican, and having, in heart and mind, renounced promptly all his possessions; and having been granted some time by our Lord, to arrange his temporal affairs, he in the meantime received our Lord, at the banquet referred to here.

11. "*The Pharisees seeing it,*" becoming aware of it. For, it is clear, they themselves were not present. "*Said to His disciples,*" took some opportunity of speaking.

not to our Lord Himself, whose crushing replies and animadversions they dreaded; but, “to His disciples,” whom they believed to be incapable of repelling the charge made. They were actuated by envy and malevolence; and hence, instead of remonstrating with our Lord Himself, which they would have done, if charity were their motive, they make His conduct a subject of reproach with His disciples, from the malicious motive of estranging them from Him.

“*Why doth your Master?*” St. Luke has (v. 30), “*Why do you eat?*” But both Evangelists give a full account of what was said, viz., “*Why do you and your Master eat with publicans and sinners?*” The Pharisees, from an affectation of superior sanctity, disdained to associate with sinners, thinking that, as they contracted legal defilement by contact with anything unclean, so to touch anything handled by sinners would be a profanation. It was not from any moral feeling of dread, that by associating with sinners they might imitate their wicked morals, and be defiled, as one who touches pitch is defiled thereby; nor from a fear of emboldening them to persevere in their wicked course; but, from a feeling of self-complacent superior sanctity, they refused to associate with sinners. Hence, the reply of our Redeemer in the following verse.

“*With publicans and sinners.*” “*Publican*” (in Greek, *τελωνης*) was, among the Romans, a person who farmed the public revenues. The *publicans* were usually Roman knights, “the principal men of dignity in their several countries, occupying a middle rank between the senators and the people” (Josephus Antiq. xii. 4). There were two orders of them, the *Mancipes*, and the *Socii*. The former, who were generally of the equestrian order, and far superior to the latter, both in rank and character, are referred to in terms of great respect by Cicero (Orat. pro Plancio. 9); he calls them, “*Flos equitum Romanorum, ornamentum civitatis, firmamentum Reipublice.*” Zacheus was probably of this class. He is called by St. Luke, “a prince of the publicans” (xix. 2). The latter class, or inferior collectors, who were under the others, were regarded, both by Jews and heathens, with aversion and contempt. They were held in particular aversion by the Jews (Matt. xviii. 17), who had great reluctance in paying taxes to the Romans, and regarded the publicans as the hated instruments of perpetuating subjection to them. And, although the office of publican, if exercised within proper limits, was not of itself sinful (Luke iii. 13), still the lower class of publicans, being noted for rapine and extortion, and oppression of the people by illegal exactions, to which they were strongly tempted by a share in the profits resulting from farming the revenues collected, were odious to all, and regarded in the light of robbers. They were excluded among the Jews from the synagogue, public prayers, and the magistracy. (Lightfoot, Hor. Heb.; Matth. xviii.; Grotius ad Matth. xviii.) Theocrytus being formerly questioned, said, “Among the beasts of the forest, the most savage were the lion and the bear; and among the beasts of the city, the Publican and Parasite” (Theocrytus apud Muson.; vide Calmet c. v. Matth.; Kitto, Cyclopædia). To this latter class Matthew belonged, and to this class reference is made here.

12. “*Hearing it,*” from His disciples, to whom these malevolent men addressed themselves; or, the words may mean, having come to the knowledge of it from His own infinite omniscience. “*Said,*” on some befitting opportunity.

“*They that are in health, need not a physician,*” to effect their cure. They may need him for other purposes; for instance, to preserve their health, and cure their daily infirmities. This is particularly true in the spiritual application of this adage. For, it is owing to the grace of Christ, that we are made just and preserved in justice.

"*But they that are ill.*" Our Redeemer refutes the malevolence of the Pharisees by a common adage. He is the spiritual Physician of souls. The publicans and sinners are spiritually sick; while the Pharisees, in their own opinion, enjoyed spiritual health. Hence, our Redeemer's mode of acting, far from being liable to censure, was, on the contrary, a subject of praise, since He associated with sinners—without danger of being infected by them, as pitch infects those who touch it, or of encouraging them to persevere in wickedness—for the charitable purpose only of curing them, and from no motive of self-indulgence; and He insinuates that the Pharisees being, in their own estimation, just, needed not Him, as the spiritual Physician of souls, to associate with them. The words, "*need not a physician,*" convey, that our Redeemer's sole object in conversing with sinners was, to heal their spiritual maladies.

13. He next confutes them from the SS. Scriptures, of which they boasted to be perfect masters. He, as it were, sends back to school—to the school of their own law—these learned and boastful doctors. "*Go, then, and learn,*" not only speculatively, but in practice also, the meaning of the following words: "*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,*" a Hebraism, denoting a preference for one thing beyond another. *I prefer mercy to sacrifice.* Hence, in Osee, it is added, "*and the knowledge of God more than holocausts,*" thus intimating, it was a preference for one before another, rather than the positive rejection of any that was meant. Hence, the words, "*and not sacrifice,*" are rather *comparatively* than *absolutely* negative. The reading here, "*I will have mercy,*" is, according to the Septuagint (ελεος θελω), in the present. St. Jerome renders it in Osee (vi. 6), in the past, "*volui misericordiam,*" "*I desired mercy.*" "*Mercy*" denotes the exercise of beneficence towards those in distress. The relief of our neighbours' spiritual wants, and the removal of spiritual misery, are the chief works of beneficence. "*Sacrifice*" embraces the external acts of Divine worship prescribed by God Himself, of which acts sacrifice is the principal; and it was only for external acts of worship the Pharisees had any zeal. In preferring *mercy* to *sacrifice*, our Lord speaks of the sacrifices of those who neglected the exercise of mercy, whom He here silently taxes with inhumanity. Not that *mercy*, which is the exercise of charity towards our neighbour, is more exalted than *sacrifice* or religion, which is the exercise of charity towards God; but the former is more necessary. God stands not in need of sacrifice, as our neighbour needs *mercy*. Hence, the man devoid of mercy can never present an acceptable sacrifice. "He does not love his neighbour, whom he sees, how can he love God, whom he sees not?" (1 John iv. 20) The words, then, mean: "If you disregard my teaching, go, and learn from yourselves the meaning of the words of the Prophet; and, then, cease to reproach me for the exercise of that mercy, to which God gives a preference before sacrifice, or external worship, which you prize so highly."

"*For I am not come,*" &c. In these words is assigned an additional reason why our Redeemer conversed and sat down to meat with sinners, derived from the nature of the office He came to discharge (or, perhaps, it may be, with still greater probability, said that these words are but a more clear exposition and application of the words, v. 12, "*they that are in health,*" &c. He here calls those "*sinners,*" whom in v. 12 He termed "*sick*"). The words mean, "My chief object or purpose in coming into this world was to call sinners to repentance." "*For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God.*" (Rom. iii.) Although our Lord found on earth some just men on His coming, such as Zachary, Elizabeth (Luke i.), Nathanael, and others; just, however, in virtue of the graces derived from His future merits; and although our Lord came to save

them, to render them more perfect, and confirm them in justice, still, He did not come to convert them, which the word, "*call*," means. The words, "*to penance*," are added in St. Luke (v. 31), and they are found in the ordinary Greek of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and although not found in several MSS. versions and Latin Fathers, they are still admitted by several respectable critics.

Some (among the rest St. Chrysostom, Hom. 31; St. Jerome, Matth. ix., &c.), hold, that our Lord ironically alludes to the Pharisees in the word, "*just*," as if He said, I am not come to those who are "*just*" in their own estimation, and need no Saviour or spiritual physician; since, it would be folly in a physician to approach those who acknowledged not their diseases, and boasted of being well in health. The words may also mean, that such is God's goodness and mercy, that if there were one hundred men on earth, and only one of them unjust, He would leave the ninety-nine just, and seek the unjust one, and submit to death on his account (Maldonatus). The words, "*to penance*," determine the meaning of the passage. They do not determine what our Saviour would do if *all* were *just*, whether He would come or not, if there were no sinners to be saved on earth.

TEXT.

14. *Then came to him the disciples of John, saying: Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples do not fast?*

15. *And Jesus said to them: Can the children of the bridegroom mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast.*

16. *And nobody putteth a piece of raw cloth unto an old garment. For it taketh away the fulness thereof from the garment, and there is made a greater rent.*

17. *Neither do they put new wine into old bottles. Otherwise, the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish. But new wine they put into new bottles: and both are preserved.*

COMMENTARY.

14. "*The disciples of John.*" St. Luke says (v. 33), it was the Scribes and Pharisees. Mark (ii. 18) says, it was "*the disciples of John and the Pharisees.*" Probably, St. Mark's is the accurate account, and St. Matthew speaks only of "*the disciples of John*," as they were the spokesmen put forward by the Pharisees on the occasion. A feeling of low jealousy animated the disciples of John, who was at this time in prison. Not unlikely, on the very day our Lord was entertained at the house of Matthew, they observed a fast, as is insinuated in the context of St. Mark, although the words may also mean, that *they were in the habit of fasting*. "*Why do we and the Pharisees fast often?*" They speak of fasts of supererogation, as the word, "*often*," implies, besides those prescribed by the law. For, with these, no doubt, our Redeemer and His disciples strictly complied, as He wished "*to fulfil all justice.*" This question was meant to be a rejoinder to His explanation of the reason which induced Him to associate with sinners, viz., for the purpose of converting them. They wish in this question to insinuate, that self-indulgence was His motive. The question was also insidiously meant by His enemies, as a snare for our Redeemer. They hoped He might censure John, which would not serve His own influence, as John was so much respected; or, if He approved of John's fasting, then, He would be censuring the line of conduct pursued in this respect by Himself and His disciples.

15. "*Can the children of the bridegroom mourn?*" "*Mourn*," denotes the particular

kind of mourning, consisting in fasting. "*Children*," by a Hebrew idiom, signifies, *near friends*, the associates and companions of the "*bridegroom*." Although our Redeemer knew well the malevolence and vain ostentation which dictated these remarks, at least on the part of the Pharisees, still, He answers them gently; and in the mildest form, justifies Himself and His disciples. For, it was against Himself chiefly the charge was made. He rests His defence on the grounds—1st. That the *time* was unsuited for fasting (v. 15). 2ndly. That the persons were unsuited for fasting or sorrow (vv. 16, 17). It would be unseemly for the friends of the bridegroom to fast or indulge in mourning, while celebrating his nuptials. Now, those who heard John the Baptist, must have heard him point to our Lord as the spouse (John iii. 29). Hence, while our Lord was celebrating His nuptials with His Church (Eph. v.; 2 Cor. xi. 12), it should be for His friends a season of joy and jubilee, to which the austerities of fasting would be quite unsuited. Christ is the spouse; because He espoused human nature, and through it the Church, in His Incarnation, by an indissoluble bond. These espousals He commenced by grace in this life (Matt. xxii. 2), and will consummate by glory in heaven, when the perpetual nuptials of the Lamb with His Elect shall be for ever celebrated. (Apoc. xix.) On this account it was that John called himself the friend of the Bridegroom (John iii. 29), and his disciples, who heard him, must, therefore, have known that Christ was called the Bridegroom. Hence, there is nothing in the above example against fasting. Our Redeemer only points out the incongruity, on the part of His disciples, to fast *during His life-time*. The example goes no farther. In this verse, it is implied, however, that in future ages the Church will impose the wholesome rigours of fasting. And from Apostolical institution and tradition, she has instituted, besides other fasts, the solemn fast of Lent, to prepare for the commemoration of the bitter Passion of her heavenly Spouse, and dispose us to share in the spiritual joys of His glorious resurrection.

16. The illustrations in this and the following verses regard the unsuitableness of the *persons* for the rigours of fasting. The preceding had reference to the *time* or *season*.

"*Raw cloth*," in the original, means rough, new-woven cloth, fresh from the weaver, without having passed through the hands of the dyer. "*For it taketh away the fulness thereof from the garment*," i.e., the addition of this piece of new, strong cloth, takes away its soundness and integrity from the old garment, by the tear which the strong new piece shall cause in the yielding old garment; and so the rent shall become worse than it had been before. Similar is the idea conveyed by the example, (v. 17), about the bursting of old bottles. The Greek for "*the fulness*," both here and in Mark (ii. 21), is, *πληρωμα*. It is rendered in the Vulgate here, *plenitudo*: in Mark, *supplementum*. From both Mark and Luke, it would seem clear, that the words, "*from the garment*," refers to the *old* garment, although some interpreters refer it to the *new* garment (Luke v. 36). But this latter interpretation would hardly suit the subject of application. Others read the original thus: "For, *he*, i.e., the man in question, offended by the unsightly dissimilarity of appearance produced by attaching the new piece to the old garment, "*taketh away the fulness thereof*" (*πληρωμα*), i.e., the supplement which was added from the (old) garment, and thus the rent will become greater than it was before. Likely, this illustration was taken from some proverbial saying, then well known. "*The fulness thereof*," may also mean, that it would not seem to be one garment at all, whether one old or one new; but two, partly old and partly new. The application of these similitudes is quite easy, and is

meant by our Redeemer to justify His mode of acting in not subjecting His disciples at first to the rigours of penance, for which, in their present imperfect state, they were unfit. His disciples He compares to old garments and old bottles; an austere system of life, to new cloth and new wine; and He argues, that if His disciples were all at once subjected to austerities quite new to them, they might fall into despondency, and desert His service altogether. Austerities are reserved for the time when, after being disciplined in the school of perfection, they shall become strong in the fulness of the grace of God's Holy Spirit.

17. This is the *third* illustration, to show that our Redeemer ought not, during His lifetime, subject His followers to the austerities of fasting.

"*Old bottles,*" flasks made of goat or sheepskins, quite common among the ancients, and still in use in Spain and other southern countries. Leathern bottles, when old and inelastic, could not expand with the fermentation of the new wine; but if the skins were new, they could distend; and, so, the bottles would not burst. The application is the same as the foregoing. Those who are lately converted, are unable to bear the heavy burdens for which the fulness of the grace of the Spirit will fit and strengthen them.

TEXT.

18. *As he was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler came up, and adored him, saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.*

19. *And Jesus rising up followed him, with his disciples.*

20. *And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment.*

21. *For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed.*

22. *But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.*

23. *And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a rout,*

24. *He said: Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.*

25. *And when the multitude was put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose.*

26. *And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country.*

27. *And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, O Son of David.*

28. *And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them, Do you believe, that I can do this unto you? They say to him, Yea, Lord.*

29. *Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done unto you.*

30. *And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, See that no man know this.*

31. *But they going out, spread his fame abroad in all that country.*

32. *And when they were gone out, behold they brought him a dumb man, possessed with a devil.*

33. *And after the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke, and the multitudes wondered saying, Never was the like seen in Israel.*

34. *But the Pharisees said, By the prince of devils he casteth out devils.*

COMMENTARY.

18. "*As He was speaking these things.*" A different order of narrative is given by Mark and Luke. But the order followed by St. Matthew is, most probably, the correct one (see v. 2). While He was in the act of refuting the calumnious charges of the Pharisees, "*behold a certain ruler,*" &c. This shows, how deserving of condemnation was the obstinate malice and unbelief of the Pharisees, since the fame of our Redeemer's miraculous works had reached every order of persons, rich and poor. The word, "*behold,*" would show that the ruler came up at once while our Redeemer was speaking. "*A certain ruler.*" St. Mark says (v. 22), "*one of the rulers of the synagogue*"—it would seem that there were many such—"named *Jairus, falleth down at His feet.*" St. Luke (viii. 41) says, the same. Whether this implies supreme worship, which the Greek word (*προσκυνει*) may, and generally does imply, or mere bodily prostration in token of reverence for a holy man, it is hard to determine from the context. Some think, from the fact of his asking our Lord to "*come and lay His hand on her,*" which did not equal the great faith of the centurion (viii. 8), that it was not supreme adoration. At all events, it conveyed a silent censure on the carping Pharisees, to whose sect, very likely, this ruler belonged, who regarded the power of Jesus as the most efficacious means of resuscitating his daughter.

"*My daughter.*" St. Luke (viii. 42) says, she was "*an only daughter, almost twelve years old.*" "*Is even now dead.*" The other Evangelists represent him as saying "*she is at the point of death*" (Mark); "*she was dying*" (Luke). Most likely, he made both statements—first, that she was on the point of death, when he left; and, then, in his hurried excitement, judging from the symptoms, and other circumstances he witnessed, he said, "*she is dead,*" at the time he was speaking. The other Evangelists (Mark v. 35; Luke viii. 49) say, that while he was with our Lord, word was brought to him, "*thy daughter is dead, trouble Him no further,*" and that our Lord told him, "*fear not,*" and went and raised the girl to life. "*Lay Thy hand upon her.*" He heard of the cure of the centurion's servant, and of other miracles, at Capharnaum; his faith, however, was not so strong as that of the centurion.

21. "*And behold.*" While on His way to Jairus' house (Mark v. 24), our Redeemer had it mercifully so arranged, that He would work the following miracles, so as to strengthen the ruler's faith. "*Twelve years,*" shows the inveteracy of the disease. Mark (v. 25), and Luke (viii. 43), say, it was incurable; that she suffered great pain in striving to have the cure effected by physicians, and incurred great expense also, but all to no effect. "*Came behind Him,*" both from feelings of modesty, owing to the nature of her ailment, and also from a fear lest she might be driven away by the crowd, if she came not as privately as possible and unobserved, this flux of blood being reckoned among legal uncleanness by the law of Moses (Lev. xv. 25). "*The hem.*" The Greek word (*τοῦ κρασπέδου*) more properly signifies, a tassel. The Jewish garment should, according to law, have four corners, from each of which a tassel of strings, or threads, was suspended, to distinguish them from the Gentiles (Deut. xxii. 12; Num. xv. 38). Circumcision was also meant for the same purpose, that thus the Jews would be reminded of their obligation to observe the law. Even now, the dress of religious is meant to remind them of their religious obligations. From this verse is derived an argument in favour of the veneration of relics of the saints, and of attaching efficacy to them, as is sanctioned by the Catholic Church. The same is clear, also, from the miracles wrought by the contact of the bones of Elisha (4 Kings xiii. 21), and the shadow of Peter curing diseases (Acts v. 15).

That the woman referred to here, did not act superstitiously, as is irreverently asserted by some Protestants, is clear from our Redeemer's attributing her cure to her great faith. The woman, not only believed in our Redeemer, but she touched His garment, from a conviction, that there was some efficacy in it, and our Redeemer felt that a virtue had proceeded from Him (Mark v. 30).

"*Thy faith*," viz., her belief in the power of our Lord, and her confidence in His goodness. For the word "*faith*," here includes both. "*Hath made thee whole*." His omnipotent power was the primary and principal cause of her cure; but her own faith acted as a disposition, or meritorious cause, for the beneficent exercise of this Almighty power in her favour (see v. 2, Commentary). Faith, though, at all times, essential, it being the "*radix et fundamentum omnis justificationis*" (Council of Trent), was especially so in the beginning of the Church, as being the essential characteristic of the believers, to distinguish them from unbelievers. The woman here did more than believe, although to faith her cure is attributed. She also touched the hem of His garment, and believed there was efficacy in it. Eusebius (Lib. 7, His. Eccles. c. xviii.); Sozomen (Lib. 5, c. vi.), and Philostorgius (Lib. 7, n. 3), say, this woman was a native of Cæsarea Philippi, and that she erected a statue of our Lord in front of her house, to commemorate this event. Socrates relates, in his Tripartite History (Lib. 6, c. 41), that Julian, the apostate, removed this statue, and had his own set up in its place, and that a strong fire from heaven shattered the apostate's statue to pieces.

23. *Minstrels*," hired mourners, introduced in accordance with the prevailing usage among the Jews, for the purpose of lamentation, and of exciting and stimulating, by their mournful strains, the grief of the relatives of the deceased. This shows that the girl had really departed this life. The practice of employing mourners of both sexes, with musical accompaniments, to bewail the dead, was commonly in use among the Greeks and Romans. Jeremiah (ix. 17) speaks of "*mourning women*;" Ecclesiastes (xii. 5), "*the mourners shall go round about in the street*."

"*And the multitude making a rout*." By their external manifestations of grief, at the premature death of the girl (Mark v. 38; Luke viii. 52).

24. "*The girl is not dead, but sleepeth*." Death is frequently called *sleep* in the Scriptures (Psa. lxxv. 6; Jer. li. 39; 1 Thess. iv. 12, &c.) Hence, from Christian usage, the word, *cemeteries*, or *sleeping-places*, to designate the *graves* of the departed. Our Redeemer says, "*the girl is not dead*," in the way the crowd imagined, in the sense that she would remain in death, and not to be soon resuscitated. In the same sense, He says of Lazarus, in his grave, "*he sleepeth*" (John xi. 11), because he was at once to be raised from the grave, by the same Divine power. His temporary death was like a *sleep*. Some Rationalists, and others, say the girl was not really dead. But that she was really dead, appears clear from the context, "*the crowd laughed at Him, knowing she was dead*" (Luke viii. 53). How know this, if she were not dead? Nor would "*the minstrels*" be present, if she were not dead? Hence, our Redeemer says here, "*she sleepeth*," just as He said of Lazarus, "*Our friend, Lazarus, sleepeth*," and afterwards explains it, by saying plainly, "*Lazarus is dead*." This explanation He gives in the case of Lazarus, as the disciples who heard Him, required it. Here, it was not wanted, as all saw the girl was dead. Hence, "*not dead*" means, so as not to return to life, which the idea of death implies.

25. "*When the multitude was put forth*." Our Lord permitted no one to be present.

on His own part, at the miracle, except the chief among His Apostles (Mark v. ; Luke viii.), Peter, James and John, who were specially admitted to witness other manifestations of His glory, as on Thabor, and were destined to be unimpeachable witnesses, to disclose this to others, at a future day ; and, on the part of the girl, He admitted her parents, who were most closely allied to her. He put out all the others, for several reasons ; among the rest, probably, to conceal the miracle from those who were disposed to attribute it to diabolical agency. Moreover, He did not wish to irritate His enemies too much at this period, as His hour for suffering, at their hands, had not yet come, and He may not have wished to drive them to desperation, before the time. When He raised Lazarus, He made no secret of it from the multitude, as His destined hour was near at hand.

"*Took her by the hand,*" to show that there resided in His sacred flesh, from its hypostatic union with the Divinity, a vivifying power. The other Evangelists add that our Lord addressed to her the words, *Tabitha, cumi*—"Maiden, arise," and that He ordered food to be set before her (Luke viii. 55), in proof of the reality of her resurrection.

26. This is added by the Evangelist, in proof or confirmation of the truth of the miracle. The entire of Galilee, including men interested in denying the truth of the miracle, if they could, were witnesses of it. The other Evangelists (Luke viii. 56 ; Mark v. 43), say our Lord charged her parents to tell no one of it, probably, with a view of avoiding the imputation of vain glory, and not to give offence to His enemies, as also to prevent the excesses of popular applause.

27. On His way home, after leaving the house of Jairus, "*two blind men,*" who heard of the many miraculous cures He performed, "*followed Him,*" (loudly) "*crying out,*" &c., "*Son of David.*" This was one of the titles ascribed by the Jews to the promised Messiah, and in this sense, the words are used on this, as on another occasion, by two other blind men (Matt. xx. 30 ; Mark x. 47 ; Luke xviii. 38)—"*have mercy on us,*" and restore our sight. It implies their belief in His power, as the promised Messiah, who was expected about this time, by the Jews (John i. 25). They only invoke the exercise of His mercy.

28. Our Lord deferred complying with their earnest prayer, for the purpose of testing and confirming their faith, and of showing the necessity of persevering prayer. So, when they came "*to His house*" at Capharnaum, He asked, did they believe in His power, "*that I can do this ?*" not merely by obtaining it for you through prayer, but, by My own power, not merely as legate, but as God ; and on their replying in the affirmative, He cured them.

29. "*Do you believe that I can do this ?*" Hence, the primary conception of the theological virtue of faith—this virtue so essential for justification—is not faith in the remission of our sins, through the merits of Christ, as some Protestants imagine it ; but an act of assent, on the part of the intellect, accompanied by the pious motion of the will, enlightened and aided by God's grace, to receive all that God has taught. No doubt, to this faith was joined, on the part of those whom our Redeemer cured, on several occasions, an act of firm confidence in His mercy and goodness. Indeed, any one who will take the trouble of reading the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, will see that faith consists in a belief in God's attributes, especially His veracity.

The blind men could come to a knowledge of our Saviour's miracles, merely through hearing. He required of them a profession of faith, and, according to that faith, that is, to the belief in His power, accompanied with confidence in His merciful goodness, was the miracle performed.

30. "*Their eyes were opened*" (i.e.), they began to see. Thus, in common conversation, we say of a man, who sees something, he did not see before, "*his eyes are opened*." In the same way, we say of men who received the faculty of hearing, "*his ears were opened*."

"*He strictly charged them*," for the reasons already explained (v. 25), "*see that no man know this*."

31. "*But they, going out, spread His fame*," &c. Some Protestant writers maintain that they sinned, in thus openly violating our Lord's positive injunction. However, it is more generally held, that they did not sin; for, many of the Holy Fathers hold, with St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, St. Jerome, Venerable Bede, St. Gregory (Moral. lxiv. c. 18), that our Lord did not mean to enjoin this on them *absolutely*; but that He meant to repress their first emotions of gratitude, so that the knowledge of the miracle would only gradually reach the people. No doubt, He acted from feelings of humility, and with a view to teach us to avoid all ostentation and vain glory. Hence, they, looking to our Redeemer's motive and intention, rather than to the strict meaning of His words, published it in good faith, from feelings of gratitude, believing it would redound so much to the glory of their Benefactor, when the people were made aware of His goodness and power in these miracles. Our Lord acted from motives of prudence also. The more stupendous the miracle, the greater the hostility of the Pharisees, with whom He did not wish, at the time, to come into open collision, nor would it suit His designs, to be now delivered up by them. His prohibition regarding publicity, only extended to raising the dead, or restoring sight to the blind, as these works, being beyond the reach of natural agency, would expose Him to greater odium and peril.

32. "*When they had gone out*," full of joy and gratitude at their deliverance, they met a wretched sufferer—"a dumb man possessed of a devil," and brought him. The Greek for "dumb" (κωφον), may also be rendered "*deaf*." In fact, it means that the devil, who possessed, him, deprived him of the use of his senses, rendering him perfectly insensible. Hence, the demon is called "*mute*" by St. Luke (xi. 14), from the effect produced by him on the man possessed. Some hold that this miracle is different from that recorded (Luke xi.); and that this latter is the same as that recorded in Matthew xiii.

33. "*The dumb man spoke*," thereby showing his dumbness to be, not a natural effect; but attributable solely to diabolical agency or demoniac possession.

"*Never was the like*," &c. The admiration of the crowd was not caused by this solitary miracle. It was caused by the many miracles wrought by our Divine Redeemer. Never before did such miracles appear "*in Israel*," or, never before did such a person appear in Israel, if we regard the number of miracles wrought, their variety, the facility, celerity, and, above all, the authority with which they were wrought. The prophets wrought miracles, after invoking the Divine aid. He wrought them from His own innate power. In this sense, no such miracles were ever wrought in Israel.

34. This was a favourite calumny of the Pharisees, which our Redeemer formally refutes (c. xii. 25, &c.) It seems probable that the miracle recorded is quite different from that recorded (c. xii. 22). While the people were extolling the miracles of our Lord, the Pharisees, maddened by envy, and unable to gainsay the facts, ascribed them to diabolical agency, to magic, and a compact with the chief of the demons. The Jews believed, that there was a variety of ranks and powers among demons, which is conformable to SS. Scripture. They never, for an instant, seemed to reflect, that the expulsion of demons was not the only miracle He performed; that He performed some miracles which exceeded the power of demons, such as raising the dead; that He performed others, which were opposed to their nature, such as remitting sin, and leading men to God, by preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, &c. Our Redeemer, unmoved by these calumnies, goes about doing good, and accomplishing His heavenly mission. It would seem, that here these charges were made in our Redeemer's absence, before the multitude who extolled His miracles.

TEXT.

35. *And Jesus went about all the cities, and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of his kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.*

36. *And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them: because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd.*

37. *Then he saith to his disciples, The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few.*

38. *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest.*

COMMENTARY.

35. Our Lord, regardless of the calumnies with which He was assailed, went about all the towns and villages of Galilee, of which Capharnaum, where He fixed His abode, was the metropolis, "*teaching in their synagogues*," which were established in all the cities and populous towns of Judea—nay, in large cities, there were more than one synagogue, "*and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom*," the glad tidings regarding the near approach of redemption, which was to throw open the gates of heaven, so long closed against the human race, and, confirming his teaching, by curing all their ailments, whether inveterate and confirmed "*disease*" (*νοσος*), or, in an incipient stage, "*infirmity*" (*μαλακίαν*). The one form of expression (*νοσος*), *disease*, denotes a more advanced step of illness than *infirmity* (*μαλακίαν*). The former signifies, a *confirmed, inveterate* disorder; the latter, incipient, temporary infirmity. Thus, our Blessed Lord cured, not only their minds, but their bodies also. (See c. iv. 23, where, in the Vulgate and Greek, the words are the same as here.)

36. "*He had compassion.*" The Greek word *εσπλαγχνισθη*, expresses the deepest and most intense feelings of tenderness and compassion. It conveys that His bowels—*σπλαγχνα*—the seat of compassion, were moved to tenderness on their account.

"*Distressed*," means worried, afflicted with various evils, especially spiritual diseases. It is likely it refers to their being worried by "*unclean spirits*" (c. x. 1), and this is borne out by the context.

"*Lying*," left abandoned and unprotected by their spiritual guides—who only cared for their own interests—a prey to every evil. "*Like sheep that have no shepherd.*" This gives an idea of their neglected, unprotected state, which so much touched the tender bowels of our Divine Redeemer, "*Viscera misericordiae Dei Nostri.*"

37. "*The harvest is great,*" &c. Here we have a figurative term, borrowed from husbandry, strongly expressive of the great spiritual wants of the people; of their dispositions to profit by spiritual ministrations; of the necessity of having spiritual teachers sent amongst them; of the good dispositions of the people, embracing Jews and Gentiles; of their longing desire to be gathered into the granary of God's holy Church, and the society of the saints, like a harvest ready for the sickle; of their destitution, having no one to care them "*The labourers few.*" As yet, only our Redeemer Himself and the Baptist. The Scribes and Pharisees, who pretended to be their guides, utterly neglected their duty. The word, "*harvest,*" also conveys, that the lot of those in charge of the people is *work*, and not idleness.

38. "*Therefore,*" a practical conclusion from the preceding verse. Some make this verse the beginning of the next chapter (x.)

"*The Lord of the harvest,*" according to some, means, God the Father. Our Lord calls His Father, "*the Lord of the vineyard*" (xxi. 40), and also "*the husbandman*" (John xv. 1). Others understand it, of our Redeemer Himself, who may be regarded as the *husbandman* and "*Lord of the harvest,*" by whom the labourers were to be sent, as were the Apostles here. The Prophets sowed the seed; the harvest is now ripe; the honour and labour are now reserved for them; the Scribes and Pharisees neglected the ripe field confided to them; it only remains for the Apostles to put their hands to the work; without waiting to be asked, He Himself sends "*labourers,*" that is, preachers and pastors, whose duty it was to *labour*. Of them the Psalmist speaks (Psa. cxxv.), "*Who sow in tears, shall reap in exultation,*" &c. He also indicates the preciousness of the gift of good *labourers*, when He asks them to pray fervently for it. "*That He send forth,*" since, without a mission, without being *sent*, they can produce no fruits, but rather mischief, as always happens in regard to heretics and self-sent preachers. "*I did not send prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied*" (Jer. xxiii. 21).

CHAPTER X.

ANALYSIS.

Anticipating the prayer of His disciples, our Lord sends workmen into the harvest. His twelve Apostles, on whom He bestows miraculous powers, as the credentials of their Divine commission. As it is important to know who these workmen are, the names of the twelve are given (1-4). He gives them certain instructions, and enjoins certain precepts on them, as to their mode of proceeding on their mission. He tells them, *where* and *what* they are to preach, and *how* to confirm their teaching (5-8). To avoid every appearance of avarice, to make no unnecessary provision for their journey, and give an example of disinterestedness (9-10). To be select as to the character of their hosts, and to treat them with Christian urbanity, and address to them on entrance, a Christian salutation; He describes the rewards of such as receive them hospitably, and the punishment in store for such as refuse to receive them or their ministrations, and how they are to act in regard to such obstinate unbelievers (11-15). He warns them beforehand of the perils they were to encounter, and tells them how they were to act in difficult circumstances (16). He predicts the persecution they were to suffer from Jews and Gentiles. He assigns motives to inspire them with courage and confidence in God in such trying circumstances (17-20). He forewarns them of another painful kind of persecution, viz., domestic persecution, and exhorts them to endure such with patience and perseverance (21-22). He instructs them to fly in cases of persecution (23). He stimulates them to the courageous endurance of persecutions and sufferings by several motives. 1st. His own example; who endured worse things from the Jews (24-25). 2ndly. Because, in due time, their true character shall be made known, and themselves duly honoured (26-27). 3rdly. Because God alone is to be feared, who exercises a special providence in their regard (29-31). 4thly. Because such as act intrepidly, and boldly confess the faith, shall be rewarded and publicly honoured hereafter; whereas the fainthearted shall be dishonoured publicly and punished eternally (32-33). He describes the peace which He came to establish, not a worldly peace, arising from self-indulgence, but a spiritual peace, which shall be the accidental cause of sowing divisions in religious matters between the nearest and dearest friends, who may range themselves under opposite banners in this spiritual warfare (35-36). He shows that the love and service of God is to be preferred to every other love that may be opposed to it, whether of near relatives (37), or even of oneself, or our own corrupt self-love (38). He points out the reward of bearing every

cross patiently for Christ's sake (39). He consoles them by pointing to the merit of those who shall receive them hospitably on His account, and the merit of any charitable work, be it ever so insignificant, done from the pure motive of Christian charity, for any of His humblest followers (40).

TEXT.

AND having called his twelve disciples together, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of diseases, and all manner of infirmities.

2. *And the names of the twelve Apostles are these: The first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother.*

3. *James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus.*

4. *Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

5. *These twelve Jesus sent: commanding them, saying: Go ye not into the way of the gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not:*

6. *But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

7. *And going preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

8. *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give.*

9. *Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses:*

10. *Nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his meat.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And having called His twelve disciples together.*" This is connected with (c. ix. 37, 38), and has immediate reference to the subject there treated of. Our Redeemer Himself, does by anticipation, what He told His disciples to pray for, viz., He of Himself sends labourers to gather in the harvest, "*His twelve disciples,*" afterwards called "*Apostles*" (v. 2), thus showing, that He Himself was "*Lord of the harvest.*" The other Evangelists (Mark iii. 13; Luke vi. 13), inform us, that our Lord had chosen His twelve Apostles before He delivered the Sermon on the Mount, in order that they might be constantly in His society, as witnesses of His doctrine and miracles, to be sent in due time to preach, vested with miraculous powers and authority required for the efficacious discharge of their exalted functions. St. Matthew, in recording the Sermon on the Mount (c. v., &c.), omits all allusion to the election of the twelve Apostles from among His disciples, or, the circumstances of the *time and place* in which this first occurred, as is circumstantially narrated by St. Luke. (vi. 13, &c.) He merely briefly alludes to it here immediately in connexion with the first public mission on which they were sent as Apostles, with miraculous powers to confirm their teaching. The mission referred to here is recorded (Mark vi. 7; Luke ix. 2).

Most likely, the account of this mission should be inserted between chapters xiii. and xiv. of St. Matthew. For, St. Mark interposes the account of the mission recorded here, between the history of our Lord's arrival in Nazareth, and that of the Baptist's death; and both Mark (vi.) and Luke (ix.) relate, that the Apostles returned to our Lord to render an account of their mission, after Herod had expressed his belief that John had been resuscitated in the person of our Lord, and, that then, our Lord and the Apostles retired into a desert place. The order, then, in which things occurred, is this: The Apostles are sent to teach the Jews; John is beheaded; Herod hearing of Jesus, is perplexed who He is; the Apostles return from their mission; our Redeemer retires with them beyond the lake to a desert place; He

satiates, with five loaves and two fishes, the vast multitude, who, on the near approach of the Pasch, flocked around Him, &c.

"*He gave them power over unclean spirits.*" The devils, or evil spirits, are called "*unclean*," because, they delight in unclean, sinful acts, and impel men to the commission of such acts. Before the coming of Christ, the devil had greater power over the world than he has at present. His power, which he so much abused, was crippled by the death of Christ (Heb. ii. 14), and by the benign influence and spread of the Gospel. The power given to the Apostles over devils, was, "*to cast them out*," and expel them from the bodies of the possessed.

"*All manner of diseases*," i.e., of a *chronic* description; "*and infirmities*," of an incipient, less aggravated kind (see c. ix. 35; c. iv. 23). These miraculous powers were to be the seal of their Divine mission, "*the fruits by which they were to be known*" and they were to be acknowledged as vested with such. (c. vii.) He gives these powers, lest the Scribes and Pharisees should be preferred to them. Moreover, as Messiah sending His legates, it was but fitting He should give them the credentials of their authorized commission. Our Redeemer shows how far He surpassed the Prophet of old. These possessed and themselves exercised miraculous powers in several instances, but in *no case* could they (nor indeed did they ever attempt it), communicate them permanently, as is done here, to others.

2. "*The twelve Apostles.*" The word, "*Apostle*," like the word, "*Angel*," is expressive, not of nature or person, but of office. In the Scriptures of the New Testament, it denotes one sent as a legate, either in a *general* sense; hence, applied to our Redeemer Himself (Heb. iii. 2), or, in a special sense, as in the case of Epaphroditus (Phil. ii. 25), or, Doctors of the Church (Acts xiv. 4-14; 1 Cor. iv. 9), or, those specially sent by our Redeemer Himself, as occupying the highest and most exalted rank in the Church, referred to here, and Eph. iv. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 28. In this last and most exalted meaning of the term, which is now attached to it by ecclesiastical usage, the word, "*Apostle*," is confined exclusively to "*the twelve*," whom our Redeemer Himself marked out as such (although, for a long period, ecclesiastical usage extended the title to others besides, as St. Jerome remarks on the Epistle to the Galatians).

For an Apostle, several conditions are required—1. To have seen our Lord in person (1 Cor. ix. 1; Acts i. 21, 22; xxii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 8). 2. An *immediate* vocation, or to be immediately sent by God Himself. 3. An universal commission, both as to place, and persons; and also in regard to functions, embracing teaching, loosing, and binding, establishing churches, and propagating the ministry. 4. The power of miracles (Mark xvi. 20; Acts ii. 43), this being the most necessary of Divine credentials, to prove their extraordinary mission from God, and thus beget "*reasonable service*" in their hearers. Hence, in preaching, the Apostles exhibited the seal of their Divine mission by working miracles, speaking unknown tongues, &c. 5. Personal infallibility and inerrancy in preaching the doctrine and precepts of Christ.

The third condition was to be exercised with a due subjection to the supreme jurisdiction of him to whom all were subjected, "*lambs and sheep*," pastors and people. In regard to the Apostles, who were each specially guided and directed by the Holy Spirit, there was no danger of collision or confusion in the discharge of this universal commission. There was no need for the exercise of the supreme authority of Peter. But, still, the supreme authority over the rest was given by our Sovereign Lord to Peter. It was, *per accidens*, that, its exercise was unnecessary. These qualities were extraordinary and personal in the other Apostles, granted to them

as Divine *legates* immediately sent by God, whose office of *legates* was to cease with themselves; and, therefore, these characteristics were not transmitted to their successors, the bishops. But, Peter's was not only the *extraordinary* Apostolic commission granted to him in common with the others, as Divine legate, in which respect his Apostolic power would not be transmissible; but, also, the *ordinary* commission given to him, and to him alone, as universal *pastor*, "*Feed my lambs, feed my sheep*" (John xxi. 15-17); and hence, the Apostolic power being in Peter, a *real* as well as a *personal* quality, was meant to be transmitted to his successors in the Holy Roman See, which is, therefore, justly styled, the *Apostolic See*, in which the plenitude of Peter's power and Apostolic authority resides; which alone is the centre and source of all Apostolicity throughout the earth, and which, therefore, can alone claim all the privileges conferred on the Apostles. (See admirable Dissertation on Supremacy of Peter, "Annual Miscellany," vol. iv., Very Rev. Dr. Murray.)

"*Of the twelve Apostles.*" Our Redeemer, it is commonly supposed, fixes on the number "*twelve*," in order that the heads or fathers of spiritual Israel, from whom the whole Christian family, the "*duodecim millia signati*," out of the several tribes of the spiritual Israel of the New Law are descended, would correspond with the twelve Fathers or Patriarchs of the Jewish nation, who prefigured these twelve chosen Fathers of the spiritual Israel of the New Law.

"*The first, Simon who is called Peter.*" This seems to corroborate the undoubted proof contained in other leading texts, of the primacy, not alone of honour, but of jurisdiction also, divinely conferred on St. Peter. St. Mark (iii. 16), and St. Luke (vi. 14), also give him the *first* place on their catalogue, although they vary from St. Matthew as to the place given to the other Apostles. Hence, it is not casually, but by design, he is placed first. *Four* times are the Apostles referred to, collectively, in the New Testament. Besides, the catalogues of the Apostles, found in the passages from the three first Evangelists here referred to, another is found in the Acts of the Apostles (i. 13), and on all these is he placed *first*. Nay, St. Matthew calls him *πρωτος*, *the first* (such is the definite force of the ordinal). If he were called so from mere order, the others should be called *second*; St. Matthew pointedly not only *places* him first, but calls him "*first*," without any ordinal reference to the others. The form, "*Simon, who is called Peter*," would seem to be the reason for placing Peter "*first*," implying that the change of name from "*Simon*" to "*Peter*" was the cause of this preference, and of the dignity and primacy connected with it. The Holy Fathers remark, that in all the catalogues of the Apostles, St. Peter is placed *first*, just as Judas is invariably placed *last*. This cannot arise from Peter having been called first to the Apostleship; for, Andrew, his brother, was known to our Lord before him (John i. 41), and both were called when together in the same boat (Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16, 17). In point of years, St. Epiphanius tells us (Heresi 51), that it was well-known from tradition, that Andrew was his senior. In Acts of the Apostles, and in St. Mark, Andrew is placed *fourth* on the list. It was not on account of our Lord's greater affection for him; for John was the well beloved disciple, who alone was permitted to lean on His breast at the Last Supper.

St. Matthew here, and St. Luke (vi. 14), show why Peter occupied the first place. "*Who is called Peter*"—"whom He surnamed *Peter*" (Luke vi. 14), which is allusive to his primacy. "*First*," means *highest* in dignity, in which sense the word is used elsewhere, "*qui vult fieri primus*," i.e., *princeps* or *præcipuus*. Whenever the Apostles are mentioned collectively, or two or three of them, he is always first. Mark (i. 36), says, "*Simon and they that were with him*." Whenever they act together, Simon acts and speaks in their name. The order varies in the lists of the

Evangelists regarding the other Apostles, to show their equality in regard to each other, subject to Peter, the head of them all.

3. "*James*," the greater, brother of John the Evangelist. He was put to death by Herod (Acts xii. 2). "*Matthew, the publican*." The mention of what was humiliating to him, shows the admirable humility of St. Matthew. The other sacred writers make no allusion to his former position, or rather, odious occupation in life. "*Thaddeus*," also called Jude, brother of James the *lesser*, and writer of the Catholic Epistle of St. Jude.

4. "*Simon the Cananean*." The epithet, "*Cananean*," which distinguishes him from the other Simon Peter, does not mean that he was from Chanaan. All the Apostles were from Judea. He was from Cana of Galilee. Some writers assert that he was the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana, at which our Lord performed His first public miracle. The Hebrew word, *cana*, means, *zeal*. Hence, Simon is termed *zelotes* (Luke vi. 16; Acts i. 13).

"*Iscariot*," according to some, means, of the tribe of Issachar; others, say, it refers to the town where he was born, "a man from Carioth," a town well known in SS. Scripture (Josue xv. 25; Amos ii. 2, &c.); others give different etymologies of the word, such as, *a mercenary man*, or, one who was *strangled*. The Hebrew root will admit these meanings, which are quite applicable to Judas the traitor. St. Jerome (Isaias xxviii.), says, he was from the town of Iscaerioth, in the tribe of Ephraim, to which tribe Judas belonged. This town of Iscaerioth was, probably, of recent growth, built after the captivity, as we find no mention of it in the Old Testament (Calmet).

5. "*These twelve Jesus sent*," as His legates, vested with His power; probably "*two and two*" (Mark vi. 7), in the order in which they are joined together here, by St. Matthew and Mark (iii. 16), for mutual consolation and support, and to show the blessing of fraternal concord. "*A brother that is helped by a brother is like a strong city*." Proverbs (xviii. 19).

"*Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles*," for the purpose of preaching. This is our Lord's *first* precept to them, which was only of a temporary nature, to cease after His death, which broke down the middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, and made them one fold under one shepherd. "*The way of the Gentiles*," a Hebrew form of expression, denoting "*among the Gentiles*," like the phrase, "*What hast thou to do IN THE WAY OF EGYPT?*" (Jer. ii. 18), *i.e.*, what brings thee into Egypt?

"*And into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not*," *i.e.*, into any of their cities to preach the Gospel. In order to know who these Samaritans were, it is to be borne in mind, that after the ten tribes of Israel seceded from Juda and Benjamin, under Jeroboam, Amri, one of Jeroboam's successors, built Samaria, which was to be the capital of the kingdom of Israel (3 Kings xvi. 24). Salmanasar, king of Assyria, carried the ten tribes captive into Assyria (4 Kings xvii.), and sent in their place, to colonize the country, people from Babylon and Cutha, &c. On the arrival of these latter, who carried with them their idolatrous worship, Samaria was infested with lions, which destroyed the country, and killed its inhabitants. This scourge was attributed to their neglect of the worship of the Deity of the land. Hence, in order to appease him, the king of Assyria had one of the captive priests sent back from Babylon, to instruct the new colonists in the ordinances and worship of the God of Israel.

After this, they united the worship of God with that of idols. (4 Kings xvii.) In this state did the Samaritans live under the kings of Assyria, having little or no intercourse with the Jews. When the Jews were permitted to rebuild the city and temple of Jerusalem, the Samaritans offered to assist them in their undertaking (1 Esdras iv. 2). The rejection of this offer by the Jews, sowed the seeds of the undying hostility which ever after existed between both peoples. The breach was rendered irreparable, when, after the return of the Jews from captivity, and the rebuilding of the temple, the Samaritans had a rival temple built on Mount Garazim, near Samaria, where victims were offered up, as at Jerusalem, and served as a place also of resort for some malcontent Jews. From this period, the Samaritans, forgetful of their Pagan origin, wished to be considered as true Israelites, who preserved in all its purity the observance of the law, with an unbroken succession of high priests, who now ministered on Mount Garazim, the seat of their religion. For a long period, before the time of our Redeemer, they gave up the worship of idols; otherwise, they could have no pretensions to be considered true Israelites, rivals of the Jews, in regard to the observance of the law, and the purity of Divine worship.

The temple of Garazim and city of Samaria were demolished by John Hyrcanus, 120 years before the time of our Redeemer. Lest the Apostles might suppose that the Samaritans, who held a sort of intermediate place between the Jews and Gentiles, were to be confounded with the Jews, our Lord specially mentions them in connexion with the Gentiles. His object in prohibiting the Apostles from preaching to the Gentiles on this first mission was, to take away all excuse from the Jews, who might justify their incredulity and resistance on the ground, that, according to the ordination of God, and His promises through the predictions of the Prophets, the message of salvation was first promised to the Jews, "*the children of the kingdom*," "the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," to whom these promises were specially made (Acts xiii. 46). To the Jews the Gospel was given, according to promise and mercy; to the Gentiles, out of pure mercy, without a promise. (Rom. xv.)

"*Lost sheep.*" The Jews were "*the sheep of His pasture.*" (Psa. lxxiii.) They belonged specially to His fold; the objects of His special care and predilection. They were spiritually "*lost*," having gone astray from God. (Rom. iii.) Hence, compared, in the preceding chapter, to "*sheep without a shepherd.*" This first precept was to be observed only during our Redeemer's mortal life. For, after His glorious resurrection, He gave the Apostles an unlimited, universal commission. "*Euntes docete OMNES gentes.*" (Matthew xxviii.) "*Eritis mihi testes . . . usque ad ultimum terre*" (Acts i. 8).

7. (*The second Precept.*) "*The kingdom of heaven*" (see c. iii. 2), *i.e.*, the Church of Christ is shortly to be established, which is the threshold or entrance into the kingdom of God's glory. This kingdom of bliss, so long closed against mankind, is soon to be thrown open by the blood of Christ. Prepare, by penance, faith, and good works, to obtain admission into it. The theme of the preaching of the Apostles was the same as His own (Matt. iv. 17); of the Baptist (iii. 2). It is clear, the preaching of penance, was also included and inculcated in the commission given the Apostles. For, the Apostles preached penance (Mark vi. 12).

The form, "*kingdom of heaven*," is peculiar to St. Matthew. The other Evangelists for it use the form, "*the kingdom of God*," "*heavenly kingdom*," "*the kingdom of Christ*." The words, "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*," is a summary of the things preached; and convey an exhortation to perform the good works that may lead to it, and avoid the evils, that may prove an obstacle to our admittance, into that kingdom of ever-

lasting bliss; in a word, "*to avoid evil and do good.*" St. Luke informs us (x. 9), that this precept of "*preaching the kingdom of God,*" was given to the seventy-two disciples. He insinuates that it was also given to the twelve Apostles (ix. 2).

8. (*The third Precept.*) "*Heal the sick,*" &c. The operation of mighty and stupendous miracles was to form the credentials of their Divine mission, necessary to beget belief in a new and unheard of doctrine; otherwise, the proud and haughty would pay no attention to the teaching of ignorant, illiterate fishermen, "*these weak and foolish things of the world,*" whom God employed "*to confound the wise and the strong.*" (1 Cor. i.) He gave the like power to Moses, so that the opposing magicians exclaimed, "*Digitus Dei est hic*" (Exod. viii. 19). The miracles they were to perform were works of beneficence, calculated to win the people to embrace the faith. Doubtless, this power was not allowed to be idle or inoperative, although we have hardly any record of its exercise left us in the Gospels.

(*Fourth Precept.*) "*Freely have you received,*" i.e., these powers they received without labour, and irrespective of merit, solely from God's gratuitous concession. This represses every feeling of *pride*, and begets *humility*. All they have is "*received.*" "*Freely give,*" gratuitously, and generously bestow it on the people, without price or payment; since, it is priceless. Thus is repressed every feeling of simony and *sordid avarice*. This may refer to the two preceding powers—of preaching (v. 7), and of working miracles (v. 8); or, rather, to the one immediately preceding, viz., the working of cures, &c. The injunction is put in so general a form, that it will apply to the selling of all kinds of spiritual gifts, which, being far beyond all price, would be undervalued, were they sold for money. What is given gratuitously by God, should not be made the subject of traffic, but be made subservient to God's glory alone. Moreover, they are not the masters of them; but only the dispensers. There are three reasons generally assigned why spiritual things cannot be sold—1st. Because a spiritual thing is above all earthly price. It is "*more precious than all riches*" (Prov. iii. 15). St. Peter tells Simon Magus, "*thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money*" (Acts viii. 20). 2ndly. Because no one is master of such gifts; but only the dispenser (1 Cor. iii). 3rdly. Because, as they come gratuitously from God, one acts irreverently towards God, whenever he exacts a price for what God wishes to be dispensed gratuitously. These two latter reasons are involved in the words, "*freely, or gratis, give.*" A. Lapiere observes here, that the reason why spiritual gifts cannot be sold, is not precisely because they are gratuitously given by God; for, God may bestow a gratuitous gift, as He bestowed science and all knowledge of art on Beseleel, the builder of the Tabernacle (Exodus xxxi.); and this he could sell and teach others for price, like any other master of an art—but, because, spiritual gifts are so exalted and sublime, so incomparably exceeding all human skill and exertions, that to sell them for money, would be treating the Author of them, God, with indignity, and would constitute the crime of sacrilege and simony.

9. (*Fifth Precept.*) Our Redeemer here points out how they should proceed on their mission, and what provision they should make for their journey. According to some commentators, the prohibition contained in this verse is not confined to the present mission of the Apostles among the Jews; it applies also to their final mission among the Gentiles. Our Redeemer, they say, here draws a true and perfect picture of an Apostolic man in every age, whose chief characteristic should be detachment from earthly goods. Unencumbered with worldly

possessions, wholly devoted to his duties, he should cast all his care on God's merciful providence.

Others maintain, and it would seem with greater probability, that the prohibition conveyed in this verse is not only of a personal, but also of a temporary character, confined to this mission of the Apostles among the Jews, to which it is immediately subjoined. No such mandate is attached to their last solemn commission (*"cunctis docete omnes gentes,"* &c., similar to the injunction regarding the place and subjects of their preaching on this first mission. This our Redeemer would Himself seem to insinuate (Luke xxii. 35), "*When I sent you without purse . . . but now he that hath a purse,"* &c., leaving it to be inferred, that the period for observing the precept conveyed here was past—we find that St. Paul had a cloak in reserve (2 Tim. iv. 13). Again, such a precept would be impracticable among the barbarous Gentiles, who would give no support to those who preached down their gods. And the Apostles, in the course of their preaching, had to provide for catechists, by whom they were accompanied. They allowed certain persons to accompany them and provide for their temporal wants (1 Cor. ix. 5). Our Redeemer Himself permitted Judas to be purse-bearer to his companions. (A. Lapide, Jansenius Gandav., c. 45, &c.) At the same time, these latter authors admit, that the *spirit* of these precepts, which were meant to inspire a feeling of disinterestedness and detachment from earthly possessions, and an unbounded reliance in God's providence, on the part of the ministers of the Gospel, extends to all times. We find that after the descent of the Holy Ghost, the Apostles, in the course of their preaching among the Gentiles, literally adhered to them; and, no doubt, the *spirit* of these precepts has reference, as far as circumstances will permit, to all future ministers of the Gospel.

"*Do not possess,"* &c. Following St. Mark (c. vi. 8), and St. Luke (ix. 3), this means: Do not provide anything unnecessary, even for journeying purposes, as the words, "*for your journey,"* here imply.

"*Nor money.*" The Greek, *χαλκον*, means, "*brass*," as if He said: Nor any other description of money. Neither money nor any other valuables, equivalent to money, should be carried by them as a store, or to be held as a reserve for their journey.

"*In your purses.*" The original word, *ζωνας*, means *girdles*, which is the same as *purses*. It is allusive to the custom among travellers of old, to carry their purses attached to their belts or girdles, or to make their girdles serve as purses—a custom still prevalent in the East. Hence, the well known phrase, "*perdidit zonam*," when there was question of losing one's money.

10. "*Nor scrip.*" In Mark and Luke is added, "*nor bread.*" The idea is conveyed here by St. Matthew. In prohibiting them the use of a scrip for carrying meat or drink, he prohibits them to carry provisions of any kind.

"*Two coats,*" any stock of duplicate clothes in reserve, or for the purposes of change. The wearing of two coats or two garments is not prohibited, if necessary. Our Redeemer Himself at the time of His sacred Passion (John xix. 23), wore more than one garment. He only prohibits duplicates of the same.

"*Nor shoes.*" St. Mark (vi. 9) says, our Redeemer permitted them to be "*shod with sandals.*" To reconcile this with St. Matthew here, some say, our Lord here prohibits them to have *two pairs of shoes*, to be kept in reserve, as in the case of the *coats*, &c. Against this solution it may be urged, that our Redeemer says (Luke xxii. 35), "*I sent you without scrip and shoes.*" Hence, others reconcile the passages in this way: He prohibits the use of *shoes which covered the entire foot*, as such might

retard them in their journey, and betray a concern for bodily comforts; that they were to go forth as they stood at that moment in His presence, "*shod with sandals*" only (Mark vi. 9), which merely protected the soles of the feet against the roughness of the roads, and were very necessary for this purpose in a stony country like Judea. This was the description of shoes worn by the poorer classes, and our Redeemer, most likely, Himself used them against the roughness of the roads. The history of the sinful woman bathing His feet with her tears, would render it probable, that He did not use shoes, the upper part of His feet being exposed.

"*Nor a staff.*" St. Mark (vi. 8) says, He allowed them a staff, "*but a staff only.*" Some expositors (among the rest Euthymius) say, that our Redeemer having, in the first instance, prohibited it, afterwards dispensed in the precept (Victor of Antioch) in accommodation to the weakness of His Apostles, and allowed them to carry a staff, as is stated by St. Mark, who, writing after St. Matthew, records this dispensation. These apply the same solution to the former question regarding the sandals. The more probable solution, however, seems to be that St. Matthew and St. Mark speak of a different description of staff. St. Matthew of a weapon, for the purposes of offence or defence; St. Mark, of a staff for support, for leaning on. This is implied in the words of St. Mark, "*but a staff only,*" as if allowed *only* for the purpose of support or propping up. Moreover, our Redeemer's object is to render them less encumbered with care or anxiety in regard to their future provision and protection — with which a walking staff did not interfere — and to cast aside all superfluities. Our Redeemer opposes the "*rod,*" which He prohibits here, to a *sword* (Luke xxii. 36), where He would seem to revoke the precept given to the Apostles at their first mission here. At their first mission, He prohibited offensive weapons. In St. Luke (xxii.) He allows them, which would show it is of a rod as a weapon of offence, and not as a means of support, He speaks here.

Some expositors, among them Patrizzi (Mark vi. 8), reconcile both readings by saying, that the reading in most of the old Greek MSS. in the Coptic, Armenian, and later Syriac versions, is in the plural, *παβδους*; that our Lord prohibits *more than one* staff, but in St. Mark, He allows *one*. But there are as good authorities for the reading in the singular. There would seem to be no reason for preventing a *change* of staffs, as in the case of clothes.

"*For the workman,*" &c. As the Apostles might allege that they could not help providing the necessities for their journey and support, our Redeemer here meets that plea, by saying, they need not trouble themselves, as they shall be provided with everything. St. Luke has, "*his hire*" (x. 7), to convey to us, that support is *due* to the Evangelical labourer, as his "*hire*" is *due* to the workman; but, it by no means signifies, that it is the price of the labour done, or an equivalent for it; since the spiritual work of preaching and of the ministry transcends all price; or that the spiritual work of the Gospel ministers should be performed with the view or end of gaining temporal remuneration. It is more properly termed by St. Paul, "*a stipend,*" such as is given to the soldier, who serves, not for the pay—his small pay would be no price for his life or labours—but to serve his country. The stipend, however, is given to him, as it also is to the Evangelical labourer, to enable him to perform the service assigned to him. *Support* is to be given the Evangelical workman, by the people; the *reward* by God. "*Accipiant prædicatores,*" says St. Chrysostom, "*SUSTENTATIONEM a populo. MERCEDEM a Deo.*" The word, "*workman,*" shows, that, in order to be entitled to his support, the minister of religion must *work*, must *labour*, for the spiritual good of his people. "*His meat,*" shows he should be contented with the necessary support, and must not seek to become rich by the Gospel.

TEXT.

11. *And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence.*
12. *And when you come into a house, salute it, saying : Peace be to this house.*
13. *And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it ; but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you.*
14. *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words : going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet.*
15. *Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.*

COMMENTARY.

11. (*Sixth Precept.*) Lest the Apostles should imagine they were free to receive food, hospitality, &c., from every description of persons indiscriminately, our Lord gives them instructions regarding the lodgings they were to choose on their mission, and the prudent precautions and discrimination they were to use in this matter.

"*Town*," a smaller place than a "*city*." "*You shall enter*," for the purposes of preaching. "*Who is worthy*," distinguished for a good and edifying life, and willing to exercise hospitality towards pious strangers. Were they to seek hospitality from an enemy of the Gospel and lodge with him, they might be maltreated and forced to change; if with any infamous character, their ministry might be brought into disrepute, and the cause of the Gospel might thus suffer. Our Lord does not tell them to ask, who is *wealthy*, or who could afford the most comfortable accommodation, but, "*who is worthy*."

"*And there abide*," &c. The same is expressed more clearly by St. Luke (x. 7); "*remove not from house to house*." As they should be careful as to their lodgings, and should avoid all precipitancy in choosing them, so having chosen a worthy abode, they should also be still more cautious to avoid all precipitancy in leaving it, lest they might be liable to the reproach of inconstancy, or a desire for better cheer; or, perhaps, give offence and pain to their former host.

12. (*Seventh Precept.*) Our Lord here gives instructions to the Apostles, as to how they are to treat the house to which they may be directed, and next verse, He also indicates a means for ascertaining if the parties so represented be really worthy. "*Salute it*," that is, its inmates. Our Lord wishes the Apostles to anticipate their host in urbanity and humility, by "*saluting*" him, so as to conciliate his good will. The Syriac version is, "*precamini pacem illi*," which is, probably, the form of words employed by our Redeemer, in the Syro-Chaldaic language. For, the following words, "*Peace be to this house*," are wanting in the Greek and many Latin copies. Neither are they found in St. Jerome's text in his Commentary of this passage. They are read, however, in Luke (x. 5). The words, "*peace be to you*," was quite a common form of salutation among the Jews, who referred to temporal things; but, our Lord includes spiritual blessings, which He came on earth to bestow, "*pax hominibus*," &c. It conveyed, that the ingress of a man was peaceful, the act of a friend, and not of an enemy. "*Peace*," meant the quiet, undisturbed possession of the fulness of all blessings, spiritual and temporal. In the case of the Apostles, referred to here, it implied the fulness of Gospel blessings.

13. "*And if that house be worthy*" of the peace you pray for it, which St. Luke

(x. 6), more clearly expresses, "*if the Son of peace be there,*" i.e., if the host deserves the blessings you pray for on his behalf, and show a worthy disposition to receive the blessings of the Gospel, by hospitably *harbouring* its first heralds and ministers.

"*Your peace shall come upon it.*" Your prayer shall be not without due effect. God will give due efficacy to your prayers.

"*Your peace shall return to you.*" Some understand this to mean: You shall have the merit of your peaceful salutation still, even though it suffered a repulse from others. Similar are the words (Psa. xxxiv. 13), "*oratio mea in sinu meo convertetur.*" (St. Jerome, &c.) Against this interpretation, the word, "*return,*" would seem to militate, because the merit and reward of the blessing given, always remained with the Apostles who bestowed it. Others understand it thus: the peace prayed for, notwithstanding its repulse by others, shall still return to you as you gave it, uninjured; so that it shall accompany and conduct you to others, who will co-operate and correspond with your good wishes. *Peace* is here personified, and represented as coming back to the Apostles, and accompanying them until it finds a host worthy of it.

The Greek for "*shall come*"—"shall return," is in the imperative form, "*may it come*"—"may it return." But, the imperative form is commonly employed by the Hebrews for the future indicative, so that the Vulgate and our English version, give the sense of the passage, and it is read in the future in Luke (x. 6); or, it may be, that the imperative form was used for the purpose of expressing the Divine power. "I wish, and therefore, shall take care, that your peace would come upon it. . . . I wish that your peace would return to yourselves."

14. (*Eighth Precept.*) "*Shake the dust,*" &c. That this precept was meant literally, seems clear, from the fact, that Paul and Barnabas literally observed it (Acts xiii. 51). The reason of this usage among the Jews may have been, to express, that they had nothing in common with the Gentiles, or a certain description of persons, just as in hearing of blasphemy, it was usual with them to rend their garments (Mark vi. 11; Luke ix. 5).

Our Redeemer's reason for enjoining it here, probably, was, to signify, that the labour undergone by the Apostles, and their long toilsome journeys, indicated by "*the dust of their feet,*" had no effect on these people, which would aggravate their sin of incredulity; or, it may denote, that they would have nothing in common with a race execrable for having rejected the Gospel preached with so much toil; not even the very worthless dust of their streets, which partook of the general *Anathema* they incurred; or, to show they took nothing from those incredulous men, not even the very dust. St. Mark (vi. 11); Luke (ix. 5) adds, "*for a testimony against them,*" which Origen (Gen. viii., Homil. 4); Hilary (Matth. x.), interpret thus: The dust thus contracted by toilsome journeys, would be "*a testimony*" on the Day of Judgment, against the incredulity and obstinacy of these cities, and a proof that they perished through their own fault alone, "*signo pulveris pedibus excussi aeterna maledictio relinquitur.*" (St. Hilary, in Matth. x.) It was customary with the Jews to perpetuate the recollection of any notable event, by some material monument (Josue xxiv. 27; Gen. xxxi. 51, 52, &c.) Hence, he adds, v. 15—

15. "*Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable,*" &c., i.e., the incredulous, who refuse your ministry, shall be treated with more rigour on the day of judgment, than the Sodomites, &c., whom fire and brimstone from heaven sunk alive into hell; because, the former resisted greater graces and neglected greater aids, than had been offered to the sinful Sodomites, &c., among whom no such preaching took place; moreover,

they had longer time for penance. Some maintain, that their sin was more grievous; that Infidelity, Heresy, Schism, are more grievous sins than Sodomy, which is the most grievous among carnal sins. The inhospitable rejection of the Apostles, may be allusive to the inhumanity and inhospitality of the Sodomites, which is reckoned among the other sins with which Sodom is charged by Ezechiel (xvi. 49). It is in this latter respect only, they are compared here according to some. However, as the comparison is general and absolute, the former interpretation seems preferable.

TEXT

16. *Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves.*

17. *But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.*

18. *And you shall be brought before governors, and before kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the gentiles:*

19. *But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak.*

20. *For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.*

21. *The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death.*

22. *And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake: but he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.*

COMMENTARY

16. He forewarns and guards them against the dangers that were awaiting them. "*Behold*," arrests their attention. "*I send you*," "*I*," who am God, the Almighty, whom no power can resist; I, who heretofore commissioned the Prophets, Moses, Elias, Isaias, &c.; I, who am "*the Lord of the harvest*" (Luke x. 2); *I send you*—therefore, have courage, and display magnanimity—"as sheep in the midst of wolves," shows their great peril. It is not the case of one wolf attacking a flock of sheep; but, a number of wolves, "*in the midst of wolves*," surrounding them on all sides, so as render their escape, humanly speaking, impossible. But in their case, "*the power (of God) is perfected in infirmity*" (2 Cor. xii. 9). "*Sheep*" are, of all animals, the most timid and harmless, most easily destroyed. This more clearly explains the sending of them without "*staff*," &c., without any weapons, *offensive* or *defensive*. Their defenceless state is the more liable to danger, in consequence of being surrounded by "*wolves*." He explains, next verse, who the "*wolves*" are, viz., men who give obstinate resistance to the Gospel, and use violence besides. Some interpreters maintain, that the following portion of this chapter was not spoken by our Redeemer on this occasion; and that St. Matthew records here, on account of the connexion of the subjects, things spoken by our Redeemer on several distinct occasions, which, according to those interpreters, is also true of the Sermon on the Mount, as given by St. Matthew. So that he gives a connected narrative of what was spoken in detached portions. For, Mark and Luke record them as spoken on separate occasions. They give, as a reason for this opinion, that the persecutions, on the part of Jews and Gentiles, could not apply to the first mission of the Apostles, which was confined to the Jews. From this, the seventy-two returned, far from

suffering persecution, rejoicing rather in their success. However, we find the words of this verse (16), also given in St. Luke (x. 3, &c.), in connexion with the mission of the Seventy-two; and it might be said, also, in reply to the foregoing, that some of the things addressed to the Apostles on the occasion of this first mission, had reference to what was in reserve for them, and what did actually befall them on their future mission among the Gentiles.

(*Ninth Precept*). "*Be ye, therefore,*" &c. "*Therefore,*" is a practical conclusion, derived from the foregoing account of the danger they were to undergo. "*Wise as serpents,*" in order to avoid the dangers they were exposed to. As the "*wolves*" are the natural enemies of the "*sheep*," so, also, were those who opposed the Gospel, enemies of the Apostles, ready to devour them. Hence, the Apostles, in dealing with these, should imitate the caution of the serpent in avoiding men, by whom he is naturally hated. The Scriptures elsewhere refer us to the industrious ant (Prov. vi. 6). St. Paul employed the "*cunning of the serpent*" (Acts ix. 25), when he was let down in a basket from the walls at Damascus; when (Acts xxiii. 6), he raised a dispute among the Jews, while professing himself a Pharisee; when (Acts xvi. 37), he proclaimed himself to be a Roman citizen. At the same time, his whole life exhibited the meekness, gentleness, and "*simplicity of the dove*." They are not, however, to imitate the malice of the serpent, in transfusing his poison when attacked. With the serpent's cunning, they should combine "*the simplicity,*" the candid, unoffending harmlessness "*of doves*."

"The Greek for "*simple*" (*ακεραιον*), conveys an allusion to unhorned animals, destitute of the natural means of self-defence, so that, when attacked or injured, they should not retaliate or inflict injury. There are various reasons assigned for this allusion to the serpent. Some say, the example of the serpent is allusive to the serpent that tempted Eve; as, with the delusive promise that she would become "*like unto God*," he tempted the weaker sex, and watched his opportunity, so ought the Apostles adopt prudent means, and watch every befitting occasion to withdraw men from evil, and bring them to God by the promises and hopes of immortal glory. They should do in the interests of truth, what the old serpent did for the purposes of evil and deception (St. Hilary).

Others say, that there is reference made to the *natural* serpent, whose cunning is proposed as a model of imitation to the Apostles in their dealing with the world; and this, according to some commentators, in some particular points—1st. The serpent exposes his entire body for the protection of his head; the Apostles should likewise submit to every hardship, even to death itself, to guard their Head, who is Christ, and to keep His faith pure and incorrupt. (SS. Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, Hilary, &c.) 2ndly. We are told by naturalists (Aristotle, Lib. 8, *Histor. Animal*, c. 17; Pliny, Lib. 8, c. 27) that the serpent, in spring and autumn, lays aside his old and puts on a new skin; and some writers say, although Aristotle makes no allusion to it, that he does so by forcing himself through narrow chinks; so ought Apostolic men, by putting off the old man put on the new, by treading in the narrow way, which alone leads to life. Again, the serpent watches an opportunity for communicating his virus; so ought Apostolic men, on the other hand, watch every opportunity of imparting true doctrine. The chief scope, however, of our Redeemer is, that the prudence of the serpent should be imitated in the avoidance of injuries and snares on the part of men, and the *simplicity* of the dove, in not retaliating for injuries received. Also, that by "*prudence*," they would seasonably avail themselves of every opportunity of gaining over others to the cause of truth; and by "*simplicity*," they would avoid all fraud or deceit in so doing.

17. (*Tenth Precept*). "*But, beware of men.*" "*But,*" is the same as "*therefore.*" In this verse is assigned a reason why they should have the cunning of serpents; and from it is also seen who are the "*wolves*" (v. 16), viz., wicked men, enemies of the Gospel. The Apostles should observe the utmost caution in regard to placing any trust or confidence in such men, who would not fail to have recourse to threats of punishment and persecution, or to blandishments, to turn them aside from the right path of Gospel truth. They should avoid such men, as far as the public discharge of the Apostolic ministry would permit.

"*In councils*"—(Greek), "*into councils*"—to be examined and tried.

"*And they will scourge you in their synagogues.*" By "*councils,*" some understand the tribunals of the Gentiles; "*synagogues,*" meetings of the Jews. (The Jews were wont to scourge in their synagogues the transgressors against their laws.) The word, "*synagogue,*" which strictly signifies, a congregation or gathering, might be understood of Gentile assemblies also.

Others understand both words in this verse, of Jewish meetings. The "*councils*" (*συνοδοι*) of the greater council among the Jews, that took cognizance of graver offences (see c. v. 23); for, in the next verse (18), there is question of Gentile tribunals. St. Peter and John were brought before "*the council*" (Acts iv. 5-7); and so were all the Apostles (Acts v. 27); St. Stephen (Acts vi. 12); Christ our Lord (Luke xxii. 26). In all these places, in which there is clearly reference to Jewish tribunals, the term used is, *συνοδον*. "*Scourge you*" (Acts v. 40; 2 Cor. xi. 24).

18. (*Eleventh Precept*). "*Governors*" of provinces, such as Pontius Pilate; Felix and Festus, before whom St. Paul was brought.

"*Kings.*" Witness Paul before Agrippa. (Acts xxv.)

"*You shall be brought,*" to be tried for your lives. Not content with the foregoing punishments, they shall also thirst for your lives.

"*For my sake,*" for having preached the Gospel of salvation. Hence, we find them afterwards rejoicing for being deemed worthy to suffer reproach in the name of Jesus (Acts v. 41).

"*For a testimony to them,*" the Jews, of whom He spoke (v. 17); "*and to the Gentiles*" (v. 18), of the truth of the Gospel. The preaching of the Gospel, under circumstances of such pressure, will furnish them with an opportunity of giving the strongest proof of the doctrine they preach, at the peril of their lives. Hence, the word, *martyr*, signifies a *witness*, who suffers for the faith; or, it may mean, a testimony of condemnation, rendered public on the day of judgment, to Jews and Gentiles, against the persecutors of the Apostles, for having rejected the truth confirmed by so many self-sacrificing evidences of meek suffering. The Apostles, at this first mission, were not to be brought before Gentile governors; but, our Lord here describes what was to occur on future occasions.

19. Poor, illiterate fishermen would naturally feel anxious and embarrassed what to say, when questioned in presence of the great ones of the earth. In these verses *three* things are expressed—1. The prohibition of all anxious thoughts and reliance on mere human erudition. 2. The promise of Divine assistance, "*it shall be given to you.*" 3. The reason, "*For, it is not you that speak,*" &c.

Our Lord does not here encourage sloth, nor does He dispense with all preparation, study, or ordinary diligence. He only wishes them to divest themselves of all excessive anxiety, all timorous, excessive, corroding solicitude (which the Greek word, *μεριμνησιν*, means (see c. vi. 25) beforehand, as to the result. When they shall be

actually in the hands of their enemies, they must confidently rely on God's providence, to give them, then, the necessary strength and power (Mark xiii. 1; Luke xxi. 14).

"*For, it shall be given to you,*" by the whole blessed Trinity, to speak, in such circumstances, in a befitting manner. Here, it is said, "*the Spirit of your Father.*" In St. Luke (xxi. 15), it is said, "*I will give a mouth,*" i.e., eloquence, "*and wisdom,*" &c., in regard to *what* and *how* you shall speak. "*In that hour,*" i.e., in the hour of need and actual danger, on account of God's truth.

20. "*For, it is not you that speak,*" &c. This is comparative. It is ~~not so much~~ you that shall speak, as "*the Spirit of your Father.*" Elsewhere (Luke xxi. 15), He says, He Himself will supply them with eloquence. He is the chief agent; they, the subordinate instruments—His mere organs.

Not but they too will speak. He, however, shall be the principal agent. Thus, we find it said, "*neque currentis, neque volentis; sed Dei misericordis*" (Rom. ix. 16), referring to God as principal, although not the *only* cause. The cause or the defence is not theirs, so much as the Holy Ghost's. While, therefore, they do their part, and employ due diligence, they should leave the rest to the Holy Ghost, who shall Himself speak, by suggesting to them *what* they are to say, and *how* to say it, as it is His own interests chiefly that are in question. He will do for them what He did for the Prophets of old. He will speak in them, as the Angel spoke through the dumb beast (Num. xxii. 28), and as the Holy Ghost spoke through Peter and the Apostles in presence of the Jewish pontiffs. (Acts iv. 29, &c.)

21. Our Redeemer forewarns; and thus, forearms His followers, against a most painful description of persecution, viz., domestic persecution. Those to whom they should naturally look for consolation in their sufferings and trials, will only help to aggravate their afflictions, and add to them. The nearest relatives, fathers and brothers, divesting themselves of all natural affection, shall persecute unto death their sons and brethren; and children, on the other hand, forgetting all ties of natural affection, shall treat their parents in a similar manner; for, as St. Jerome observes, "*natural affection is lost in those who are of a different faith*"—"nec ullus inter eos fidus affectus, quorum diversa est fides." (St. Jerome, in chap. vi. Matth.)

22. "*By all men,*" i.e., "*by all (wicked) men;*" or, by *many*; or by every description of men, relatives and strangers, rich and poor, noble and lowly, Jew and Gentile.

"*Shall be hated,*" although injuring no one, but doing good to all.

"*For My name's sake.*" Not through any fault of your own (1 Peter iv. 15), but, solely on account of your professing My faith and worship.

"*Shall persevere,*" &c. He now encourages them, with the prospect of the reward which shall be given them. "*Persevere,*" the Greek (*ὑπομείνας*), *endure, bear up*, in suffering and in faith to the end. St. Mark (xiii. 13) has, "*endure.*"

"*Shall be saved.*" This is the reward of merit, which is, however, founded on grace. Our Redeemer conveys two things here—1st. That we must suffer, as is clearly expressed elsewhere—"per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei;" 2ndly. That we must persevere in suffering; otherwise, it shall be of no avail to us. We must persevere in patient suffering "*to the end,*" to the final term of our existence in this life. Salvation is the crown of perseverance.

TEXT.

23. *And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another. Amen, I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities of Israel, till the son of man come.*

24. *The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord.*

25. *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the good-man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?*

26. *Therefore fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid, that shall not be known.*

27. *That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the house-tops.*

28. *And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell.*

29. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father.*

30. *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

31. *Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows.*

COMMENTARY.

23. (*Twelfth Precept*). It might be said, or rather, objected, if we are hated by all men, and sought after to be persecuted, how, then, can we preach the Gospel? Our Redeemer, anticipating this objection, tells them, that when men will obstinately resist their preaching in one place, and seek their death, let them "*flee*," thus exhibiting the prescribed cunning of the serpent, by avoiding the snares of men. They, however, are not merely to *flee* into solitudes or deserts, to remain inactive; they should "*flee into another city*," and thus make their persecution, and the consequent flight, the occasion of extending the kingdom of Christ. For, it is not simply flight, to be made the occasion of indolence; but flight, to be made the occasion of the wider propagation of the faith, that is here enjoined. Hence, against Tertullian (*Lib. de fuga, &c.*), it is sometimes *lawful* to fly from persecution, when charity or justice do not require the contrary, as is sanctioned by the example of our Redeemer Himself flying into Egypt (c. ii. 14), and when His enemies sought His life (Luke iv. 30), "*for His hour had not yet come*;" and of St. Paul (*Acts ix. 25; 2 Cor. xi. 33*). It is sometimes a *duty* to fly, when the glory of God and the utility of the Church demand it, and when it is necessary for the cause of God, that a public, distinguished character, should not be prematurely cut off, and when no injury would result to others from such flight. It is sometimes *permitted*, and a matter of counsel; and sometimes *unlawful*, whenever either charity or justice may prevent it; as, for instance, in the case of a man charged with the care of others, and when it is not the *pastor*, but the *flock*, that is primarily and principally assailed, whose faith and morals would be seriously exposed and injured, owing to the absence of their pastor, who, moreover, would be deprived of the sacraments. To *fly* from his *post* in such circumstances, would be to act the part of a hireling. (John x.) Some commentators confine this to the *first* mission, on account of what follows.

"*Amen, I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities*," &c. Others, more probably, say, that, although these words were uttered on the occasion of the *first* mission, when the evils referred to did not occur; still, they had reference to the entire course of the Apostolic mission, and serve as a rule for the pastors of the Church, and all Apostolic men till the end of time.

"*You shall not finish*" You shall always have places for flying to, and for extend-

ing the Gospel ministry. The words may mean: You shall not have overrun, in preaching, all the cities of Israel, in this your first mission, until the Son of man shall return to you in a glorious state, after His resurrection, when He shall give you another commission, and assign the world as the theatre of your labours. The coming of the "*Son of man*" is, however, more generally understood of His glorious coming to judgment. Hence, others understand it: You shall not have fully converted the Jewish people until the final coming of Jesus Christ to judgment; thus, taxing the incredulity of the Jews, whose total conversion is reserved till after the Gentile world is converted, or, till the final end of all things (Rom. xi. 25). Others, by "*Israel*," understand, spiritual Israel, consisting of converted Jews and Gentiles, the *duodecim millia signati*, of the several tribes of the entire earth, to whom the Apostles, whose *second* mission also is included here, shall have ample room to flee at all periods of the world. For, the fulness of the Gentiles shall not have entered the Church till the Day of Judgment (Rom. xi. 25).

24. Having foretold persecutions, our Lord now adduces some considerations, for the purpose of animating them to bear the persecutions in store for them, with courage and patience. He first employs certain familiar adages, clearly understood, and, probably, in vogue among the Jews, such as, the disciple and servant cannot expect better treatment, or to be better off than their master and lord. This is applied to Himself, next verse. So, He adduces His own example, in the first instance, to animate and encourage them.

25. The servant and disciple should be content with being treated as well as their master and lord; nor should they refuse to submit to the same privations which their master had to undergo.

"*If they called the good-man of the house.*" In this, as well as in the preceding verse, we cannot but admire and adore the wonderful modesty of our Lord, who speaks of Himself in the *third* person, "*the good-man of the house*," Himself, who is the head and founder of God's house, the Church, of which the Apostles were members and inmates.

"*Beelzebub*," which means, "*Lord of flies*," *dominus muscarum*, an idol of the Accaronites, so called, either because he was invoked by these Pagans against the plague of flies, or because the blood of victims, with which he was besmeared, attracted the flies, and caused the idol to be covered all over with them. This filthy idol was such an object of horror and execration to the Jews, that they designated the *devil* by that name; just as they called *Gehenna, hell*, owing to the shocking and barbarous rites carried on there by the Chanaanites. This opprobrious epithet, the Jews did not scruple, in the height of their fury and malevolence, to apply to our blessed Lord, as is expressly mentioned here, although we find no place in the Gospel where they call Him such. It is only said of Him, that He makes use of Beelzebub, "*in principe Daemoniorum, Beelzebub, ejicit demonia*" (Matt. xii. 24). But here it is expressly stated, they called Him Beelzebub, very likely, when their rage and malevolence had reached the highest pitch of excitement. If He, the Lord and Master of the house, was treated with such contumely, His disciples should be content, with His Divine example before their eyes, to bear reproaches and contumely with meekness and patience.

26. "*Therefore*," as in suffering reproaches and calumnies, as well as in persecutions of all sorts, you are only enduring what your Lord and Master had to endure before you. "*Fear them not.*" Fear not their calumnies, nor any punishment they may desire to inflict on you.

"*For, nothing is covered,*" &c. As a motive for consolation to the Apostles, these words may mean: That, although the private virtues of the Apostles, and their upright motives may now be hidden and unknown, in the Day of Judgment, and even in this life, their hidden virtues would be made known, and the hypocrisy and malignity of their persecutors publicly revealed or exposed, so that men would now honour them, in proportion to the contumelious treatment they were hitherto subjected to; or, that, although the Gospel was now regarded by men as hidden and obscure, the day would soon come, when it would be announced and believed all over the earth; and, hence, the Apostles should not be deterred by calumnies and opposition, from courageously announcing it. This accords well with the following.

27. "*The dark,*" and "*the ear,*" mean, *privately*; "*the light,*" and "*the house-tops,*" denote, *publicly, openly*. "*House-tops,*" is allusive to the style of houses in Judea. They had flat roofs, which served as a usual promenade for the people. What was said there might be overheard by others; and it might be regarded as spoken in *public*. There are two evils which cause men the greatest pain—the loss of honour, and the loss of life. Our Redeemer, in this and the preceding verses, fortifies His Apostles against any fear regarding the former. In time, their honour, their character, shall be publicly vindicated. In the following verse, He fortifies them against any timid fears regarding the latter; and although He had already spoken of the loss of life (v. 21), still, He here first treats of the loss of character; because, honour is held in the greatest estimation among men, and He had been treating of the contumelious, reproachful treatment they should endure immediately before (v. 25).

28. Having fortified them against the fear of infamy and calumnies, He now fortifies them against the fear of death. He wishes them to overcome, by the consideration of the fear of God, the inordinate fear of man, which might influence them to desert the proper line of duty, and offend God.

"*That kill the body,*" by depriving it of temporal life, which, in any event, it is destined soon to lose. They can go no farther. They cannot kill the soul, by either depriving it of immortality, or, what is worse, of the life of grace or glory, which is the second death of the soul. But, if they fear at all, "*but rather,*" let them fear Him, who will not kill soul or body—for carnal men would wish for this—but by an eternal living death, or dying life, "*can*"—irrevocably—"destroy both soul and body in hell," where their worm shall never die, and their fire shall never be extinguished (Isa. lxvi. 24). This refers to God, to whom alone belongs the high prerogative of life and death. To demons, the Scripture never ascribes such a prerogative.

29. Our Lord here adduces another reason to fortify them against fear of persecution, and of the loss of life. Nothing happens in this world save by the will and superintending providence of God, who will not permit anything to befall them, except as far as He sees it will tend to their greater good. This He demonstrates, from the example of the most worthless and insignificant objects in nature.

"*Two sparrows,*" worthless birds—one is hardly worth mentioning—"sold for a farthing." "*Farthing,*" is put up for the smallest coin, "*and not one of them,*" which is hardly worth anything, "*shall fall on the ground,*" shall be killed by falling dead from the air to the earth. "*Without your Father,*" without His special providence and permission. The words, "*your Father,*" have a peculiar significance in the present matter. He is their Father, and can hardly be said to have this relation in regard

to "*sparrows*." When the Apostle says (1 Cor. ix. 9), "*Doth God take care for oxen?*" there is no contradiction between these words and the words of our Redeemer. Our Redeemer speaks of God's general providence, which extends to the minutest things, to the very brute animals, and provides for them according to the course of general laws (Gen. viii. 1; Psa. cxlvi. 9; Job xxxviii. 41); whereas, the Apostle speaks of a special providence exerted by Him, as Father, towards man. He speaks of a law, suggesting humanity, which was chiefly intended for man, rather than for oxen (1 Cor. ix. 10). In this passage there is question of this two-fold providence of God—of His general provision for all creatures, according to the operation of certain fixed laws, and of His special providence as Father, "*your Father*," which makes special provision for man, and ordains His law, in regard to irrational creatures, for his special benefit, and has regard to all men, without exception of persons (Wisdom vi. 8).

30. "*But, the very hairs,*" &c. "*But*" (δε, καὶ) signifies, *nay more*, the most insignificant and superfluous parts of your persons are under God's special providence. Instead of inferring from the foregoing (v. 29)—as one would imagine—whereas the sparrows are not killed, save with God's permission, with how much greater concern will your Father protect you from being killed; or, should death befall you, it will be arranged by Him for your greater good; our Redeemer goes farther, and says, that not only are their life, and the members of their bodies, a subject of concern to God, but so, also, are the very hairs of their head. It is an *argumentum a minore ad majus*.

"*Have been numbered*." The past tense is meant to show, that already are placed under God's special care and protection, not alone, their life, their members; but the very minutest parts of them.

31. "*Fear not, therefore,*" &c. Proceed intrepidly and courageously in the holy work of preaching the Gospel, committing yourselves to God's special providence. "*Therefore*," expresses the practical conclusion from the foregoing.

"*You*," on whose account the sparrows and all animals exist—which is common to all men—and who are specially the sons of God, "*are better*," &c. Although hated by all men, proceed, therefore, courageously to your work of preaching, casting yourselves on God's providence, who will provide for you better than you could for yourselves, and will make your sufferings subserve to His own greater glory, and your final salvation.

TEXT.

32. *Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven.*

33. *But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.*

34. *Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.*

35. *For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother-in-law*

36. *And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household.*

37. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.*

38. *And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me*

39. *He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it.*

COMMENTARY.

32. Having animated His disciples already against persecutions, without fear of infamy or death, our Redeemer now animates them by placing before them the utility of confessing Him, and the misfortune entailed by the denial of Him.

"Therefore," may be an inference from the foregoing (16-22), or it may be regarded as a continuation of the preceding, as in Luke (xii. 28). "*And I say to you,*" &c. Here, is conveyed an additional reason to preach Christ intrepidly. "*Every one that shall,*" by word, or example, or by act, "*confess Me before men,*" in due circumstances, and shall persevere to the end in doing so, and, interrogated by tyrants regarding the faith, shall openly and ingenuously profess that he believes in Me, as the eternal Son of God, and shall also, sooner than violate My law, submit to death, thus honouring Me and My law, such a one, "HIM," "*will I also confess before my Father,*" &c., i.e., I shall honour him before all mankind on the Day of Judgment (Mark viii. 38), "*cum venerit filius hominis,*" &c. He here proposes a reward, to induce them to preach Him intrepidly; and He contrasts, the glory which they shall publicly receive, in presence of His Heavenly Father, and all mankind, with the honour they give Him before *men*. He compares His Father and the Angels (Luke xii.) with men, and Himself with us, mortals.

33. If the hope of reward will not animate them, then let the fear of punishment do so. There are certain circumstances in which the open confession of our faith is a matter of precept, under pain of damnation. "*He will deny them; He will know them not,*" and so they shall be condemned, "*discedite a me, &c.*"

For "*confess Me,*" the Greek is, "*confess in Me,*" a Hebrew and Greek construction for "*confess ME;*" or, the words may mean, as with Maldonatus, "*glory in Me,*" make Me the subject of their glorying in due circumstances; in Him shall I *glory*, and make the subject of my boasting, in turn. Or, "*in Me,*" may mean, *concerning Me*.

34. St. Thomas, and others, connect this with the preceding, thus: having told His Apostles not to give up preaching, from fear of death or reproach, He now warns them not to desist from preaching out of any love or affection for relatives. For, from the preaching of the Gospel, and the observance of His precepts, divisions would come, even between the nearest relatives (v. 21). Between them, a separation in religious matters must sometimes intervene, and now He forewarns them of it; so that when it takes place, they may not be taken by surprise, or scandalized, as if the oracles of the Prophets (Isaias ix. 6; Micheas iv. 3), regarding the peaceful reign of the Messiah, were not verified in His case. For, the consequence of His coming is not a worldly peace, nor a worldly external concord among men. As "*Prince of peace,*" whose first advent into the world proclaimed peace on earth, He came to announce a holy, spiritual peace, which leads to glory and everlasting rest, and not such concord, as might be found amongst robbers, and which should be termed *unpunished wickedness*, rather than *true peace*. The result of His coming was not a false peace, such as that, nor peace consisting in the enjoyment of worldly cheer, riches, and pleasure. "*But the sword,*" i.e., separation (Luke xii. 51), as is explained in the following verses.

35. "*I came,*" i.e., the consequence of My coming is; or, if there be question of the act whereby the faithful party separates himself from the unbeliever, and differs from him in the profession of the true faith; then, He came *directly* for this purpose.

But as regards the *unbelieving* party, and the dissensions caused by him, this was not *directly* intended in the coming of Christ; He was only the *occasional* cause of it, and He permitted it to occur, just as it is said of Him, that "He *delivers* men over to a reprobate sense;" that He "*was set for the ruin and resurrection of many*" (Luke ii. 34).

"*To set a man at variance,*" i.e., a son, "*against his father.*" Our Redeemer mentions three *pairs* of people, including five persons most intimately connected—*son, father, daughter, mother*—including also mother-in-law, and daughter-in-law. "*These five in one household shall be divided,*" says St. Luke (xii. 52).

36. "*And a man's enemies,*" &c. These words are quoted from Micheas (v.), and with the Prophet, they immediately and directly refer to the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and express the unnatural intestine differences which would then take place, when every one, forgetting the closest ties of kindred and blood, would forsake all, and betray them in order to secure personal safety. These words of the Prophet are accommodated by our Redeemer to His present purpose, although, having reference to a different matter, and used in different circumstances. The Gospel shall sever and snap asunder, the closest and most intimate family ties. The case supposes, that some members of the same family believe, and others refuse to believe, who will persecute and try to seduce the others. The dissensions are supposed to be on the side of the unbelievers; for, as regards the believers, their faith teaches them to cultivate, as far as possible, peace with all men. If, however, the words refer to the believer, the separation and enmity referred to, only regard the difference of religious belief, and the separation from the unbelieving party, which the preservation of his faith would imperatively demand; this plucking out of the right eye, this cutting off of the right hand, that might prove the occasion of scandal (c. v. 29, 30).

37. Lest it might be alleged against what He had said, about sending the sword (v. 34), and setting at variance, in the sense explained, the members of the same family, that piety towards parents would stand in the way, He says, that our love for God should be stronger than our affection for parents; so, that whenever they oppose themselves to the will of God, we must, in the conflict of duties, not regard them, but adhere closely to God. The love of our parents should yield to our love of God, so that, if necessary, and in case of conflict, we should give them up for Him. "*He that loveth father or mother more than Me,*" when the love for parents and the love for God are opposed, "*is not worthy of Me.*" As St. Luke explains it (xiv. 26), "*He cannot be My disciple.*" He is unworthy to bear My name; or, to be reckoned among My followers.

"*And he that loveth son or daughter,*" which is more intense than the love of children for parents. This is also explained of conflict or opposition.

38. Still more, love of self must yield to our love for God. "*Taketh not,*" cheerfully and willingly, and patiently, from the hands of God, "*His cross,*" trials and sufferings, nay, even a cruel death, if necessary. "*His cross,*" the trials marked out for him by God's special providence, who knows best what cross to send each individual, as He may destine it for him. In this, He alludes to the cross He Himself was, one day, to carry on His shoulders for our sakes.

"*And followeth Me,*" i.e., bearing it patiently and willingly for the cause of justice, after My example, and submitting to all evils and trials, in the cause of God, sooner than violate His laws. To "*suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer,*" &c.

(1 Peter iv. 15), would not be "FOLLOWING Him." The word, "*cross*," may, in a general sense, be understood of the patient endurance of all the evils which God sends us in this life.

39. He shows the advantage of bearing the cross, even to the extent of undergoing an ignominious death, for Christ's sake, and the detriment of avoiding the cross, and saving one's life by the denial of Christ and abnegation of the faith.

"*He that findeth his life*," i.e., rescues, preserves it when placed in such imminent peril as to be equivalently lost, and thus virtually "*finds*" as if lost, "*his life*," *animam suam*, i.e., in this world, by a denial of Me, and by a renunciation of My faith.

(This, the antithesis in the next words, "*for Me*," requires), he that shall save and preserve his temporal life, at the expense of renouncing Me, "*shall lose it*"—shall forfeit life everlasting.

"*And he that shall lose his life for Me*," to which St. Mark adds, "*and the Gospel*" (viii. 35), "*shall find it*," i.e., shall enjoy everlasting life. The word, "*life*," *anima*, is taken in different significations in both numbers, as is the word, "*dead*," in the sentence, "*Suffer the dead to bury their dead*." The words signify, whosoever shall sacrifice his temporal life in this world in My defence, and in defence of My Gospel and the cause of justice, sooner than commit sin, such a man may forfeit his temporal existence, and may lose the enjoyment of temporal life; but, he shall gain the happiness of eternal life. The word, "*life*," is taken by some to denote the *whole man*, *semetipsum*. He that shall lose himself in this world, and shall sacrifice the perverse love of self, shall gain himself, his soul and body, the entire man, in the world to come.

TEXT.

40. *He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*

41. *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet: and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man.*

42. *And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.*

COMMENTARY.

40. Having foretold the calamities and afflictions that were to await them, and the privations they were destined to undergo, He now, by way of consolation, shows them that they were not to be totally destitute; but, that He was to exercise a special care regarding them. And He points out the rewards of such as would show them hospitality, as being His own vicegerents and legates. He had already shown the punishment that would await such as would reject them (v. 15).

Whosoever received them, received and gave hospitality to Jesus Christ Himself who sent them. The treatment shown an ambassador is equivalently shown to his Sovereign. Hence, He adds, "*He that sent Me*," as if to say: It is, because they received Him, in the quality of one sent by His Father, that they received His Father, which reason also holds in regard to the Apostles sent by Him. What an exalted honour to receive Jesus Christ and God the Father. He who receives the

Apostles as His legates, receives Jesus Christ; and he who receives Jesus Christ as His Father's legate, receives the Heavenly Father Himself.

41. "*Receives*," hospitably entertains and treats beneficently, "*a prophet*," a preacher of the Gospel, a teacher of the faith.

"*In the name of a prophet*." On the grounds of being a prophet, or, *because* he is a prophet. "*Because, he belongs to Christ*" (Mark ix. 40), not because of relationship, kindred, or country, he who receives a prophet, as *such*. And yet this is not so great an honour as to receive an *Apostle*. Our Redeemer proceeds here on a descending scale.

"*Shall receive the reward of a prophet*." Some understand this of the reward such as the prophet or teacher shall receive for teaching; since, according to the terms of ancient warfare, "*equal shall be the portion of him that went down to battle, and of him that abode at the baggage*" (1 Kings xxx. 24). In the eyes of God, to administer to the support of a teacher of the Gospel, is the same as if one were himself actually to discharge the sublime office of teaching.

Others understand by it, the reward which the prophet can give, viz., the blessings and prayers, together with the benefit of instructions and good counsels given by the prophet.

"*Just man*," a still less important personage than a prophet. Whosoever receives him, "*in the name of*," *because* he is, "*a just man*," that is to say, a man remarkable for piety and holiness of life; he that shall receive him, *because* he is holy and pious; shall receive proportionately the reward in store for the prophet or just man. It may also mean, a reward of the *same kind* that the prophet or just man, shall receive, although, perhaps not to the same amount. His co-operation in the work of the prophet or just man, partakes of the nature of their work, and so is entitled to a proportionate share of the reward, according to the degree of co-operation. Thus, we find, on the other hand, the receivers of stolen goods and the co-operators with rebels punished in the same way as thieves or rebels, the principal actors, although not to the same extent (A. Lapide).

42. Our Redeemer advances farther and lower still, in the descending scale, both as to the qualities of the persons served, and the degree of service rendered. It is not every one that may enjoy the privilege of receiving a prophet; nor is it every one that can exercise hospitality. "*Whosoever shall give*," to whom? not, to a prophet, nor to a man distinguished for sanctity, but, "*to one of these little ones*," one of the humblest followers of Christ, who may either be living a good Christian life, or endeavouring to do so, whether he be just or unjust. "*Shall give*." What? the most trifling thing, "*to drink a cup of cold water only*," from the spring, out of hand, without the expense of heating it—the most trifling thing in nature, in the power of the poorest.

"*In the name of a disciple*," or, as St. Mark has it (ix. 40), "*because he belongs to Christ*," or is a follower of Christ, and, therefore, whatever is given him is given in honour of Christ. At this period the faithful were called "*disciples*" of their Heavenly Master. Some time after the Ascension, they were called, "*Christians*," at Antioch (Acts xi. 26).

"*Only*," may affect the preceding, as above, "*only a cup of*," &c.; or, the following: "*In the name of a disciple*." Any thing, however trifling, shall He reward, provided only that it be done to a disciple as *such*. For, while benevolent to all, we should be particularly so, to "*these little ones*," the domestics of the faith (Gal. vi. 10).

Some suppose our Redeemer had little children near Him, and, as usual, pointed to them.

"*Shall not lose,*" i.e., shall receive, "*his reward.*" Such a reward as God, who regards the intention and affection with which a work is performed, more than the act itself, is pleased, out of His boundless liberality, to attach to such an act done for His sake. God always rewards beyond what the works are of themselves entitled to. He *rewards*; and *strict merit* is involved, owing to the great *liberality* of God *promising* His rewards.

Eternal life is given to us on two grounds—1st. As an inheritance due to the sons of God. In this way it is given to infants. 2ndly. As a *reward of merit* due to us, because God has been pleased to promise eternal life to certain works, performed with certain conditions, principally, in a state of sanctifying grace. This applies to adults. When God crowns our merits, He only crowns His own gifts" (St. Augustine).

CHAPTER XI.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of the embassy from John in prison, consisting of two of his disciples, to inquire of our Redeemer if He were the long-expected Messiah. Our Redeemer's reply, who knew well the spirit that dictated this on the part of John, who had in view to remove and cure all feelings of jealousy on the part of His followers (1-6). Our Redeemer's encomiums on John, after his disciples had left; He praises his unchanging firmness, which luxurious living did not enervate (7-8); his prophetic character, angelic life, long before the subject of prophecy (9-10); his singular worth and sanctity; his success in preparing men for the Gospel; his having discharged the office of Elias (11-14). By a familiar similitude, He reproaches the Scribes and Pharisees with their obstinate resistance to the preachers of God's kingdom, Himself and the Baptist, in whatever character they might appear, whether austere, or mild and condescending (16-19). He next upbraids the cities, specially favoured with His miracles and preaching, with neglect and obstinate resistance to God's grace, and He points out the heavy punishments in store for them (20-24). He glorifies His Eternal Father for His wonderful dispensation in regard to the humble, to whom, in His mercy, He imparts Divine knowledge, and the proud and haughty, from whom, in His justice, He withholds it (25-26). This wonderful economy was common to Himself and His Father, with whom He possesses perfect equality (27). He invites all, Jews and Gentiles, to approach Him, and thus receive *rest* and *respite* in their spiritual miseries and disquietude (28). He invites them to take up His yoke and learn of Him to practise, in particular, the virtues of humility and meekness, the surest means of bearing His yoke patiently, or to approach and learn from their experience of Him, that He is not a repulsive tyrant, but a benign, affable, condescending Master. For, His yoke is sweet and His burden is light (29-30).

TEXT.

AND it came to pass : when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he passed from thence, to teach and preach in their cities.

2. Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ : sending two of his disciples he said to him :

3. Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another ?

4. And Jesus making answer said to them : Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen.

5. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them.

6. And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me.

7. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John : What went you out into the desert to see ? a reed shaken with the wind ?

8. But what went you out to see ? a man clothed in soft garments ? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments, are in the houses of kings.

9. But what went you out to see ? a prophet ? yea I tell you, and more than a prophet.

10. *For this is he of whom it is written: "Behold I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee."*

11. *Amen I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is the lesser in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

12. *And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.*

13. *For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John:*

14. *And if you will receive it, he is Elias that is to come.*

15. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Had made an end of commanding.*" The Greek word for "*commanding*" (*διατασσειν*), means *arranging, giving instructions*; whether of precept or merely of counsel, as it is used (1 Cor. xi. 34). Here, the word refers to all the precepts, counsels, predictions of evil, and promises of good, included in the preceding chapter. The word "*commanding*," might, however, be taken here in its strict signification, if we follow the opinion of some expositors, who hold, that, on occasion of the first mission of the Apostles, our Redeemer confined His instructions to the commands relating to that mission; and hence, St. Matthew employs the word "*commanding*" here. According to these, our Redeemer delivered on a different occasion, or rather on several occasions, many of the subjects recorded in the preceding chapter by St. Matthew; who, though remarkable for recording at full length, and in detail, our Redeemer's words, is not so particular as the other Evangelists, about the order of events.

"*He passed from thence.*" He departed from His twelve Apostles, whom He left to *themselves to preach without Him*. St. Matthew omits all mention of what they did; but, this is recorded by Mark (c. vi. 12, 13); Luke (ix. 6).

"*To teach and preach.*" He did not remain idle in the meantime; nor did he commit these important functions to be vicariously discharged by others. Those who labour through others, shall be remunerated through the same. They shall forfeit all rewards, themselves. "*Qui per vicarium operabitur per vicarium remunerabitur.*"

"*In their cities.*" "*Their*," according to some, refers to the cities of the Apostles, or of Galilee, the Apostles being Galileans; others understand them of the cities to which the Apostles were sent, two and two, before Him to preach (Luke x. 1); and therefore, He came after them. Others, most probably, understand them of the cities of the Jews, to whom our Lord had confined the preaching of His Apostles. "*Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (c. x. 6). "*Their*" is an example of a Hebrew idiom, according to which, the antecedent of a pronoun is not expressed, but understood, from the context and circumstances.

2. "*John had heard,*" from his disciples (Luke vii. 18). From this, it would appear, that the embassy from John to Christ, is not recorded here in its proper place by St. Matthew, since it occurred before the mission of the twelve Apostles, as we learn from St. Luke, who narrates this embassy (c. vii.), and the mission of the Apostles. (c. x.)

"*In prison.*" John was cast into prison by Herod, for having, fearlessly, in vindication of the sanctity of God's law, upbraided him with the scandalous, adulterous state of incest, in which he lived with Herodias, the wife of his brother, Philip (Mark vi. 16, 17). Imbued with that spirit of intrepidity, which he carried from his mother's womb, which was strengthened and guarded by a life of austerity and self-

of his mother

denial, he feared not the countenance of the mighty; knowing no distinction between a royal sinner and his subjects, whom he upbraided with their vices, as, "*a brood of vipers*," when they came out in crowds to his preaching and baptism on the banks of the Jordan (Matt. iii.); reckless of the consequences, which he knew would cost him his head, he upbraided the kingly adulterer to his face, "*it is not lawful for thee to have*," i.e., to live on terms of intimacy with "*your brother's wife*" (Mark vi. 18). The consequence was he was cast into prison.

"*The works of Christ*," the many splendid miracles performed by Him (Luke vii.)

"*Sending two of His disciples*," &c. There is a diversity of opinion as to the purpose of this message from the Baptist. One thing is certain, that it did not proceed from any doubts which the Baptist himself—this "*more than a Prophet*," who had "*no greater among the born of women*"—entertained regarding our Lord's Divinity. He proclaimed Him from His mother's womb (Luke i. 41). He witnessed the descent of the Holy Ghost, and heard the testimony of the heavenly Father proclaiming Him as His beloved Son, on the banks of the Jordan (Matt. iii. 17). He himself publicly bore testimony to His superiority, declaring himself unworthy to perform the most menial offices in His regard (Mark i. 7; Luke iii. 16), before our Lord had performed any public miracles. The most probable and best founded reason for this embassy seems to have its origin in the jealousy, which John knew to exist in the minds of his disciples towards our Lord and His disciples. Strangers to that spirit of generosity which animated St. Paul, who cared not who preached, provided Christ was preached (Phil. i. 18), they complained that Jesus baptized, and their master was deserted (John iii. 26); and St. Luke tells us (vii. 18), that, it was on the occasion of his disciples coming, and manifesting feelings of jealous envy of our Lord's wonderful works, John sent this message. It is likely also that, contrasting the ascetic and austere life of the Baptist and his disciples with the absence of all such austerity on the part of our Redeemer and His followers (Mat. ix. 14), and perhaps offended with the lowness of his station in life, to which our Redeemer probably alludes (v. 6), his disciples regarded John's exalted testimony, concerning our Redeemer, as spoken out of humility; and that, therefore, they might have been disposed to prefer the Precursor to the Lord Himself. Hence, in order to cure this growing evil, John sends two of his disciples, in his own name, for the purpose of investing this embassy with greater solemnity, to question our Redeemer on the subject of his Divine mission. In order to cure their infirmity, he feigns their disease, "*quis infirmatur et ego non infirmor?*" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) Knowing also that his days in this world were fast drawing to a close, it is most likely that the Baptist had in view to introduce his disciples to our Redeemer in person, to attach them to Him after his own death.

3. "*Art thou He that is to come?*" &c., which is understood by St. Jerome to mean, art thou He, that is to come to Limbo, whither I am shortly to go? St. Jerome adopts this meaning, because, our Lord had already come into this world. But the most probable meaning is; art thou that distinguished Prophet, that Redeemer, whom the Jewish people, following the predictions and promises of the Prophets, are daily expecting as their Messiah? *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, "*ille venturus*." The Greek does not refer to any future coming, "*art thou He who was to come*." He could not be expected to come in future and be present at the same time.

4. "*Go*"—return—"and relate to John," &c. Our Redeemer, who knew well the

mind of John, in proposing this question, in His own name (for, John himself had no doubt whatever, verses 7, 8, &c.), employs the same heavenly prudence displayed by John, and wishes to have the disciples cured of their doubts and hesitancy, the more effectually through the master to whom they were so much attached, and to whose words and opinions they would naturally attach much weight. He answers them, as if they had merely represented the feelings of John, though He knew well this was not really the case. He also refers them to a testimony less questionable than any testimony conveyed by words, the testimony of works. For, we are told by St. Luke (vii. 21), that He had, at the moment, wrought miracles, in their presence.

"What you have seen and heard," that is to say, the miracles "*you have seen*," performed by Me, in your presence, and the preaching of My doctrine, which "*you have heard*;" or, rather, the other miracles, of which you have heard an account from the people who saw them, but, which you did not witness, such as, "*the dead arise*." This they did not see; but, only "*heard*" spoken of.

"The Greek has, "*which you see and hear*," in the present. This may be verified of the miracles wrought in their presence (Luke vii. 21), and the accounts of other miracles given at the moment, by the people; or, "*hearing*," may be understood of our Redeemer's preaching. "*You see*," may be also verified of the prophecy of Isaias, which they saw with their eyes to be fulfilled in Him.

5. "*The blind see*," &c. The first part of this verse is allusive to Isaias (xxxv 4, 5, 6). The second, "*the poor have the Gospel preached to them*," to Isaias (lxi. 1). This passage of Isaias regarding the preaching of the Gospel to the poor is applied by our Redeemer to Himself (Luke iv. 18). His answer is, that John would clearly see that in Him were fully fulfilled the prophetic words of Isaias when describing beforehand the distinctive qualities and actions, that would characterize the future Messiah.

"*The poor have the Gospel*," &c. In Isaias (lxi. 1), for "*poor*," it is "*to preach to the MECK*." But the two words refer to the same class, the *poor* being generally meek and forbearing, in contrast with the rich, who are generally haughty and disdainful. There is but very little difference in the corresponding Hebrew words, *ani* (*poor*), and *anau* (*meek*). Hence, St. Luke (iv. 18), quoting Isaias, has, "*to preach the Gospel to the poor* *He hath sent me*," the two words for *poor* and *meek* being nearly the same in Hebrew. The Septuagint read it *animo* (*poor*); St. Jerome, *ananim* (*meek*). There is a great similarity of words, and of signification also, the *poor* being "

"*The Gospel preached to them*." The Jews held that the Messiah was to found a kingdom. It was a wonderful thing, that this kingdom should be proposed to the poor; that beggars should, in a spiritual sense, become kings, was a wonderful thing, a wonderful feature of the Christian religion. It was different with the Jews and Pagans, who courted the rich and despised the poor. While the *rich* are not excluded, the poor are specially referred to in the prophecy; and the rich must become "*poor in spirit*" to become fit subjects for receiving the Gospel, and partaking of its rich spiritual blessings.

6. "*And blessed is he*," that is, he who does not depart from Me, who am the Saviour of mankind, and author of life, is so far blessed, and in the way of salvation; while he that does is so far, unfortunate.

"*That shall not be scandalized in me*." The word, "*scandal*," in its literal signification, denotes an obstacle or impediment in the way, which may cause us to fall. Transferred to a spiritual signification, it denotes whatever may cause our fall,

or that of our neighbour; or turn us aside from the path of Christian faith or morals, be it word, deed, or omission. Hence, *scandal* is described by divines, after St. Thomas to be, a word, deed, or omission, which is the occasion of the spiritual ruin of our neighbour, either because such word, &c., is sinful; or, has the appearance of being so. That things only apparently sinful may be a subject of scandal is clear from Romans (c. vii.). Our Redeemer was to the wicked and incredulous a stone of offence and a rock of scandal, and set for the fall, as well for the resurrection of many (Luke ii. 34), through their own fault and malice.

These words are spoken in allusion to the incredulity and jealousy of the disciples of John, who probably were offended at our Redeemer not living apart from the crowd, and His not leading the same austere, ascetical life as their master led, as if He said, blessed is he, to whom My doctrines, My life, My Cross shall not prove a stumbling block, or rock of offence, as we are assured by the Apostle, they were to the unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 1); and, as a melancholy experience teaches us, they are, practically at least, to a great number of those who profess themselves Christians.

Here also we see the wonderful benignity and prudent forbearance of our Divine Redeemer in displaying to the disciples of John His Divine power of searching into their hearts, and knowing their thoughts, without disclosing their latent feelings to the multitude by any personal allusion, or particular address. He thus leaves them to their own conscience, so that, from this occult reproach, they might see His Divinity and benignity, and be thus induced, after the Baptist's death, to adhere to Him.

7. After the disciples of John had gone away, and no sooner, lest any praise of John in the presence of his followers might savour of adulation.

"*Jesus began to say to the multitudes,*" &c. Having cured the disciples of John of their incredulity, our Redeemer now prudently takes care to cure the multitude of any false notions this embassy from John might engender in their minds regarding John's constancy, and the unhesitating firmness of his belief in our Lord's Divinity, as if this message proceeded from any change of opinion on the part of John.

"*What went you out into the desert to see?*" He appeals to their own opinion of John, when leaving their homes, the towns and cities, they flocked into the desert, and to the banks of the Jordan, to hear this wonderful man, and be baptized by him. (c. iii.)

"*A reed shaken,*" &c. A man of a fickle inconstant character, blown to this side and that, by every blast of human opinion; now holding this; and again that; now proclaiming Christ to be the Messiah—the eternal Son of God; again, doubting it, as the embassy and words of his disciples would seem to imply. The well-known sanctity of the Baptist precluded any such suspicions so disparaging to his character. They regarded him rather as a man of unshaken firmness—immovable as the sturdy oak—who, at the cost of his head, would not fail fearlessly to proclaim the truth, for which he was now suffering in chains. Some take the word "*reed*," in its natural sense; did they come out to the banks of the Jordan, to enjoy its scenery and the numerous reeds growing on its banks? However, it is clear from the context, that the metaphorical meaning, as above, is the one intended.

8. Perhaps, luxurious living, a spirit of accommodation to the whims and caprices of the great, with whose livery he was clad, at whose tables he was the welcome and accepted minister; perhaps, the badges of courtly ignominy in which he was clad—the price of his criminal connivance at the domestic and public villanies of the great—

so wrought on him as to make him changeable in his opinions, and now, to gratify their caprices, not only make him "*a dumb dog, unable to bark*," but also cause him to revoke the testimony he before rendered to the Divinity of Jesus. His place of abode from childhood,—the desert—his coarse dress, the prison where he just now was, preclude any such supposition; neither luxurious effeminacy, nor ambitious, or self interested motives could cause any change of opinion in him. "*They that are clothed in soft garments*" do not make the desert their place of abode; nor are they, for the bold announcement of unpalatable truths, cast into chains. They are to be found "*in the houses of kings*," the obsequious instruments of their capricious whims and tyrannical behests. John was firm and constant, and had all the qualities necessary to witness to the Divinity of our Lord.

According to Calmet, John only meant to enquire, if the man who wrought the wonders, of which he heard so much, was the Messiah, the same of whom he himself had before borne testimony. So that, according to him, John's object merely was to ascertain the *identity* of our Saviour's person.

9. Having shown what John was not, our Redeemer now shows, what he was.

"A Prophet!" "*All held John as a Prophet*" (xxi. 26). This was the popular opinion regarding him, and this opinion our Redeemer confirms, "*Yea; I tell you.*" For John knew our Lord by Divine instinct, and pointed Him out as Son of God, and so, he was a Prophet. But did not John himself deny this (John i. 21)? Yes; out of humility, and he might say so, with all truth in one sense, looking to the primary and ordinary signification of the word, "*Prophet*," viz., one who predicts future events to be fulfilled after a long interval. But, John pointed Him out as present, and called on the people to prepare His ways by works of penance, who was the term of all the prophecies, and so he "*was more than a Prophet.*" He was also "*more than a Prophet*," for other reasons, grounded on the circumstances of his miraculous birth, and angelic life. Moreover, he was himself the subject of prophecy, in which he is placed on a level with the celestial spirits, "*an Angel*," who was immediately to precede his Lord, to be His Precursor and Paranymp. It is this latter reason our Redeemer specially has in view when He says he was "*more than a Prophet.*" "*An Angel*," in virtue of his office, not by nature.

10. "*Behold . . . before Thy face*," &c. (Mal. iii. 1.) In Malachy it is, "*My face.*" The Evangelists have, "*Thy face.*" But, the sense is no way affected by this difference or change of person; St. Jerome remarks (in Isaias, Lib. 3, c. 7), "that, in their quotations from the Books of the Old Testament, the Apostles and Evangelists attended more to the sense, than to the precise order of the words." Here, our Redeemer clearly represents the Heavenly Father, as speaking of His Son, "*before Thy face*," in Malachy. St. Jerome understands the words of Malachy to refer to Christ, speaking of Himself; and then, His Divinity is clearly demonstrated. For, in Mal. iii. 6, He says, "*I am the Lord, and am not changed.*" If the words of Malachy be understood of God the Father, the consequence is just the same, as showing the identity of nature in Christ and in His Father. For, it was Christ that John preceded as Precursor; and speaking of Him whom John preceded, the Lord says, "*My face*," therefore, implying that, "*He was in the Father and the Father in Him*," both having the same nature. In truth, Christ or the Messiah was "*the Lord*," whom the Jews expected to come to His temple in Jerusalem; for whom John was "*to prepare the way.*" It is the same that speaks of Himself in the first person, "*I send My Angel*," and in the third, "*and presently shall come to His temple the Lord whom you seek* (see Mal. iii. 1). If we suppose

that it is God the Father that speaks in Malachy (iii.); then, the change of person, "*I send.*" "*the Lord shall come,*" &c., is intended to convey, that although identical in nature with the Son; still it was not the person of God the Father that came to save us. The same is conveyed in the change of person given by the Evangelists, "*before Thy face—in the face of THEE.*"

"*My Angel*," by office, but not by nature, as some hold, which is clearly refuted in the Gospel—"there was a MAN sent by God," &c. (John i.) The angelic life led by the Baptist would entitle him to be called an "*Angel.*"

"*Who shall prepare Thy way,*" &c., is allusive to the custom of preparing the ways, and removing every obstacle at the coming of kings into any part of their dominions. John, by his preaching and baptism, removed every obstacle to the proper reception of Christ; by his austere and heavenly life, by his preaching of the penance which he practised, he prepared the people for the doctrine of our Redeemer.

11. He proves, that John "*was greater than a Prophet.*" "*There hath not risen,*" that is, appeared, "*among them that are born of women, a greater,*" &c. "*Risen*" is a term peculiar to prophets. St. Luke (vii. 28) says, "*there is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist;*" hence, the comparison is not between John and all other men, but between him and the *Prophets* of old. This, however, will make but very little difference, and the sense is fully given by St. Matthew; for, among men, the Prophets were deemed the most holy, and the word "*Prophet*" was, in a general and more extended sense, applied to holy men. The words, then, taken in a positive, affirmative sense—for this is necessary in order to show that John is "*more than a Prophet*"—mean, that John the Baptist was the most holy and exalted of all the men that appeared before him, whether we consider the exalted prerogatives bestowed on him—his miraculous birth, the loosing of his father's tongue, his angelic life, his sanctification in his mother's womb, his being predicted by other Prophets, called an *Angel*, &c.; or, whether we regard the more abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit plenteously bestowed on him. Other Prophets became such in course of life; he, from his birth, was such. He leaped with joy in his mother's womb, at the presence of his Blessed Saviour (Luke i. 41). Although "*there arose no other Prophet in Israel like Moses*" (Deut. xxxiv. 10, &c.), which has reference merely to his seeing God, and working wonderful prodigies; still, John was greater in the several prerogatives already referred to.

It is between the ancient Prophets only and John this comparison is instituted; hence, neither the Blessed Virgin, nor the Apostles are included, who, on account of their Apostolic dignity, and immediate association with Christ, are *greater than John*. Our Redeemer Himself can, by no means, be included, even supposing the comparison to be between John and all others, because He was not "*born of woman,*" in the sense here referred to, in the natural way; nor can the Blessed Virgin, either; for, it is between men the comparison is instituted.

"*Yet, he that is lesser,*" &c., according to some, means, the *least saint* reigning in glory is greater than John; because, the former possesses the crown of glory, the latter is battling for it (St. Jerome); and, in this interpretation, our Redeemer's object would be, to stimulate men to labour earnestly for the kingdom of heaven, by entering the Church which is the gate to it. Others say the words mean, the *least* in the Church, the least of those who embrace the Gospel, is greater than John—*ratione status novæ legis*—considering his state, is greater than any one outside the Church, greater than John who was nearest to it—the connecting link between the Old Law and the New. It tells against this interpretation, that the comparison would

not be between John and others, but between the New Law and other dispensations. Nor can it be seen what our Redeemer's object, in using the words, according to this interpretation, would be, unless, possibly, to stimulate men to enter the Church, and embrace the Gospel.

Others maintain, that our Redeemer, in this, was referring to Himself, thus: do not imagine that, in bestowing these magnificent eulogiums on John, I include Myself in the comparison, or prefer him to Myself. Out of modesty, He would speak of Himself in the third person.

"*Lesser in the kingdom*," that is to say, younger than John; later in the ministry of preaching. "*Qui post me venturus est, ante me factus est*" (John i. 15). Up to this time, our Lord was *lesser* in the esteem of men than the Baptist.

"*In the kingdom of heaven*," may be joined with "*lesser*," thus: he who is lesser in the Church of the just, in point of age and in the opinion of men; or "*lesser*," later in preaching the kingdom of God, "*is greater than he*." Or, they may be joined to the following words, "*greater than he, in the kingdom of heaven*," greater than he in spiritual gifts, which appertain to heaven: or, reputed greater in heaven by God and His holy angels, who know how infinitely our Lord is placed above John, as the Creator above the creature.

12. It is greatly in commendation of John, that his preaching of the kingdom of heaven, which he was the first to proclaim as near at hand, joined to his holy and edifying example, has been so efficacious and fruitful in results, that, from his first appearance in public, men rush forward in crowds, with the most eager impetuosity, combined with the rigours of penance, and the violence they offer their passions and corrupt inclinations, to secure for themselves the peaceful possession of this happy kingdom.

"*Suffereth violence*," conveys the idea of a fortress or citadel, which men rush forward with impetuous eagerness to attack and carry by assault; or, of a precious merchandize, which men, with eager competition, contend with one another in purchasing. It was much in commendation of John, that his preaching had this effect on the people. The words convey, that John "*was more than a Prophet*," since, from his time, "*the kingdom of heaven*," which was referred to as distant by the ancient Prophets, was pointed out by him as near at hand, within the reach of the people.

The "*violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers*," must mean, the violence which the assailants offer themselves and their own passions, since violence cannot be offered to a kingdom—"et omnis in illud vim facit" (Luke xvi. 16). Some commentators, with Maldonatus, say, the meaning is, that "*the kingdom of heaven*" is a prize; no longer, as in the Old Law, a matter of hereditary right, confined to the chosen people, but open to all, so that all may compete for it, and successfully carry it off. "*Many shall come from the east and west*," &c. (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

"*The violent bear it away*." This is literally true of many among the Jews, who, moved by John and by our Redeemer, did penance with great ardour, and earnestly applied themselves to procure heavenly blessings. If there be question of *heaven*, they bore it away; because, they established a claim to possess it, at a future day.

"The words may also mean, that since the time of John, who was the first to preach "*the kingdom of heaven*," this kingdom "*suffers violence*," i.e., cannot be obtained except by violence, and the violent alone secure it. So that there is not question of how many acquired the kingdom of heaven, or if any did so; but only of the *manner* in which heaven is to be acquired, and of the *necessary* means to be employed for this purpose.

"*The violent bear it away*," i.e., it is only those among men who shall have legitimately contended for it, by attending to the conditions of the warfare, and with ardent eagerness labouring for its acquisition, without any regard to birth, race, or country, that shall secure this prize; but not those idle, indifferent men, who offer no violence to their own passions, and make no exertions for its acquisition.

"*Bear it away*." The idea is borrowed from a camp or citadel, that is carried by assault.

13. The emphatic word in this verse seems to be "*prophesied*," as if He said in commendation of John that, "*the Prophets*, or the *writings of the Prophets*," (as the word means, c. v. 17), and "*the Law*" had obscurely pointed to Christ and the mysteries of His kingdom, as in the distance; but John pointed him out as present to whom all the Old Law had reference. For, "*the end of the Law is Christ*" (Rom. x. 4). They dealt in distant shadows and types. John pointed to the reality, not as distant, but present. Hence, in St. Luke (xvi. 16), it is said, "*the Law and the Prophets were until John; from that time the kingdom of heaven is preached*," and not "*prophesied*," or obscurely signified, as in preceding times. The words of this verse are placed, by some commentators, before those of preceding verse (12), following the order given in St. Luke (*ut supra*). However, the casual particle, "*for*," can be very naturally connected with the words of the preceding verse (12), *from the days of John the Baptist*, &c., and in this verse (13), is assigned a reason for saying, "*from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffered violence*," because till then, it was only obscurely and distantly pointed out in the Law and the Prophets; but since his time it was openly and clearly announced as present; and hence, men rush forward to gain possession of it, as of an object now within reach.

Before John's time, the Law only foreshadowed future blessings in figures; and the Prophets foretold them. But, now, all these figures are fulfilled and realized in the Gospel, the antitype of the Law. Hence, the office of Law and Prophets has now ceased, and the kingdom of the Messiah, with its gifts and blessings, is now open to all who wish to compete for them, on the prescribed conditions, and to carry them away as prizes.

14. "*If you will receive it*," that is, if you receive John, and believe as you ought, not failing at the same time to co-operate, voluntarily, with the graces now tendered to you—without which co-operation on your part, those graces and opportunities shall avail you but little—John will be the same in your regard, that Elias will be in regard to those to whom he is to announce the second coming of the Son of God.

"*He is Elias that is to come*." Elias is to precede "*the great and dreadful day of the Lord*," at His *second* coming (Mal. iv. 5), and the Baptist has preceded His *first* coming. He is not Elias in *person*. This John himself disavows (John i. 21), but he comes "*in the spirit and power of Elias*" (Luke i. 17), which may refer to the *PAST* spirit and power displayed of old by Elias, whose manner of life, dress, and works, resembled those of the Baptist; or, more probably, to the *future* power and spirit of Elias to be displayed in the conversion of the Jewish people before the second coming of Christ at the end of the world. As then, John now discharges the same office of converting the Jews (Mal. iv. 6; Luke i. 17), which Elias is to discharge at the end of the world, the Messiah must already have made His appearance; and it depends, in a great measure, on themselves, and their own co-operation—"*if you will*"—whether John will be, in this latter sense, an Elias to them, by converting them to the Lord.

The words, "*if you will*," may also denote, that John is not Elias *in person*, but, that they should look for another meaning in the words of Malachy, besides their literal import.

15. "*Ears to hear*," means, a docile and obedient spirit, fit for receiving and obeying the truth. "*Let him hear*," that is, let him attend to the mystical and moral meaning of the words, "*he is Elias*." "*Mysticum enim erat et egens intelligentia*" (St. Jerome). This refers to the character and qualities of Elias ascribed to John, and to the consequent advent of our Saviour, which required their faith and obedience in embracing the Gospel. "*Let him hear*," in other words, let him believe John to be a Prophet, and accept his testimony regarding Me as the Messiah; and let him—which "*hear*," implies—believe Me to be the Eternal Son of God. For this, obedience of the will—"let him hear"—is required, "*corde creditur ad justitiam*" (Rom. x. 10).

The words of this verse are understood by some commentators, to be an introduction to what follows. It is hard to say, whether they are to be connected with the preceding, or with the following. They are a form of expression employed by our Divine Redeemer, whenever He wishes to solicit particular attention to anything as very important, or, to any hidden secret.

TEXT.

16. *But whereunto shall I esteem this generation to be like? It is like to children sitting in the market-place.*

17. *Who crying to their companions say: We have piped to you, and you have not danced: we have lamented, and you have not mourned.*

18. *For John came neither eating nor drinking; and they say: He hath a devil.*

19. *The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners. And wisdom is justified by her children.*

COMMENTARY.

16. Hitherto our blessed Lord was engaged in bestowing a magnificent eulogium on the Baptist, which tended to add weight to his testimony regarding our Redeemer's Divinity. In virtue of His Divine omniscience, He knew that many among the Scribes and Pharisees did not assent to what He said, and, "*despised the counsel of God against themselves*" (Luke vii. 30). On this account, He commences to reproach them.

"*Generation*," does not embrace all the Jews then living, but only the Scribes and Pharisees, who paid no attention to His eulogiums on John, and heeded not His own Divine teaching.

"*To be like*." The comparison is instituted only in a *general* way, to illustrate the main features of the case. It is not meant to compare exactly all the parts of the parable, with all the corresponding parts of the principal subject. It is meant to illustrate the *general scope* of the subject.

"*In the market-place*" (*ἀγοαῖς*), means, not only the *market-place*, but the *broad places* in the streets, at their intersection, where there is a concourse of people.

"*It is like to children*." The generation of men, whom our Redeemer reproaches, were not like the children crying out in the market-place, but rather, like those who were not moved or affected to grief or joy, by the performances of the children in question. Our Redeemer and John the Baptist correspond in likeness with the

children referred to; and this our Redeemer insinuates in the application of the similitude (verses 18, 19). The meaning, then, is this: Something, like unto what would occur, in the case of "*children piping*" in the public streets, and personating the several turns of human life, without producing any effect, either in the way of joy or sorrow, on their companions or the bystanders, occurs in regard to the present generation. Similar are the phrases, "*the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder*," &c., "*is like to ten virgins*," &c., the meaning of the phrases being, that something similar to what occurs in the case of a householder, or of ten virgins, occurs in the kingdom of heaven.

Some commentators say, there is allusion here to a common practice among the Jews, when two sets of boys dramatized in the public streets the vicissitudes of human life—one party representing marriage, and other festive scenes; another, funeral mournings. It is not necessary, however to understand the allusion of any existing custom. The example itself supposes it to be the same party that played joyful and plaintive airs. Hence, we need not suppose it to be anything else than an imaginary case, or what might happen. "*We have piped*" (ἡυληκαμεν), we have played on the flute, a merry, joyous tune.

18. *The application.* John the Baptist made his appearance as a teacher, exhibiting the sternest virtue, the most austere asceticism, suited to him, who came to preach penance as a preparation for the kingdom of heaven, "*neither eating nor drinking*," like other men, and they put him down as a madman, a lunatic, possessed of a devil.

19. "*The Son of man*"—the peculiar designation of our Redeemer—"came eating and drinking," living, in this respect, like the rest of men, so that He might attract all men to Him, by His benignity and kindness, which well became Him who came to remit sin, who called upon all to approach Him as "*meek and humble of heart*." He acted so, in order that His benignity and affability might attract such as would be repelled by the austerity of John. And how is He received? His condescension and kindness, far from recommending Him, are made the subject of calumnious reproaches. He is charged with loving good cheer; with wishing to make publicans and sinners His friends and associates. So that whether their preachers were austere or gentle, it was all the same; no effect was produced by either course, on such perverse men.

"*And wisdom is justified*," &c. By "*wisdom*" (in Greek, ἡ σοφία, "*the wisdom*"), is generally, and most probably, meant, the wise counsel and dispensation of God's providence employing every, even sometimes, the most opposite means, such as austere asceticism on the one hand, and mild, benign condescension on the other, as exhibited by the Baptist and our Redeemer respectively, in bringing men to salvation. This seems to be the meaning most naturally suggested by the context, and the comparison instituted by our Redeemer in the foregoing passage. "*And*," may be interpreted, "*but*," "*however*"—a sense it frequently bears—so that the words would mean: The Scribes and Pharisees have perversely resisted all the means, whether there be question of examples of meekness and condescension; or, of austerity and ascetic rigour, intended by God for their conversion; however, the wisdom of Divine Providence is declared just and approved of as having employed due, effectual means for the end it had in view.

"*By her children*" (απο τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς), that is, by those who have availed themselves of the means furnished by God's wisdom as motives for receiving the

faith of Christ, which they actually embrace. "*By*," may signify, "*on the part of*," or, "*in regard to*" her children, who are really wise, in contradistinction to the Pharisees, only wise in their own conceits, to whom our Saviour refers (v. 25), "*Thou hast hid these things from the wise.*"

The above interpretation accords well with the words of St. Luke (vii. 29), "*And all the people hearing, . . . justified God, being baptized with John's baptism.*" St. Luke (vii. 35), has, "*by ALL her children.*" Hence, some commentators (Maldonatus, &c.), understand, "*her children*," of the entire Jewish people. Those of them, who believed, justified God's wisdom, by following its adorable dispositions; the incredulous portion also justified it, by showing, that no means was left untried for their conversion; that they determinedly opposed every means proposed to them, and that their obstinate unbelief was the result of their own obstinacy, and not of God's wise providence. The former interpretation seems preferable. The wisdom of God's providence, exhibited in the austerity of John, and the condescension of our Lord, was declared just, *irreprehensible*, and perfect.

Others, by "*her children*," understand, John and our Redeemer, who justified God's wisdom in leaving nothing undone to save men. These understand, "*ALL her children*," of all the other Prophets and teachers, who employed similar means and followed the same manner of life respectively. By all these, God's wisdom is justified, so that the impious are deprived of all excuse; nothing was left untried to save them. "*Quid ultra facere debui vineæ meæ et non feci?*" (Jansenius Gandavensis.)

TEXT.

20. *Then began he to upbraid the cities, wherein were done the most of his miracles, for that they had not done penance.*

21. *Wo to thee, Corozain, wo to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sack-cloth and ashes.*

22. *But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you.*

23. *And thou Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day.*

24. *But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*

COMMENTARY.

20. After reproaching the Jewish people, in general, with their perverse obstinacy and resistance to the Gospel, our Redeemer now specially upbraids those cities that were specially favoured with His frequent visits, His preachings, and many miracles.

"*Then.*" According to St. Luke (x. 13, &c.), our Redeemer upbraided the cities on the occasion of sending the seventy-two disciples to preach. And the words (verse 25), according to St. Luke (x. 21), were used by Him after the disciples returned and were glorying in their success; hence, some commentators say, that St. Luke describes the order in which things occurred, and that St. Matthew, as is his wont, gives in a consecutive narrative, the words spoken by our Redeemer on different occasions, so that he gives here, after the message from John, what was spoken on the occasion of the mission of the seventy-two disciples, and these explain, "*then*," to mean, *at that time*, or, during the course of our Blessed Redeemer's mission and preaching

Others say, the words were spoken twice by our Redeemer, on the occasion of the message from John (Luke vii.), and on the occasion of the mission of the seventy-two disciples.

"Then," when sending His disciples to preach in more distant places, owing to the incredulity and impenitence of the neighbouring cities, to which He Himself had preached with little, or, no fruit, "*for, that they had not done penance.*" This is the subject for which He reproached them. In many instances, most likely, they were incredulous; but, the cause of reproach is not precisely that; but, because they did not reform their lives and "*do penance,*" for the past, in accordance with the teachings of that faith, which many of them, probably, embraced—for, not unlikely, many of those whose actions are here censured, believed Christ to be the Messiah; but, did not, however, change their lives.

21. "*Corozain and Bethsaida,*" both cities of Galilee, near the Lake of Genesareth, and frequently favoured with our Redeemer's visits and miracles.

"*If in Tyre and Sidon.*" He mentions these, because, they were Gentile cities in their neighbourhood remarkable for wealth and its concomitant vices, for which they were denounced by the Prophets Isaias (xxiii. 1), and Ezechiel (xxvi. 2; xxvii. 3; xxviii. 2, 12).

"*Long ago,*" i.e., at once, without so long resisting God's graces and invitations, as you have done; without waiting for so many exhortations and miracles, such as you were favoured with.

"*Had done penance,*" aided by the internal graces which God would not fail to bestow upon them.

"*In sackcloth and ashes.*" In allusion to the custom in the Old Law, followed by remarkable penitents, of wearing sackcloth, and of sitting in ashes; so that the Tyrians, &c., would not only have done prompt penance, but also, remarkable penance. This shows, what the accompaniments of a truly penitential spirit were, the penitential works in which it should be manifested. These our Redeemer approves of here. Hence, an argument in favour of the Catholic practices of penitential works, in the same way as He must approve of the practice of *fasting*, when He lays down certain conditions for its exercise. (vi. 16, &c.)

22. "*More tolerable,*" &c. Although the Tyrians and Sidonians shall be condemned on the Day of Judgment, for their manifold crimes against the natural law, to observe which they had *sufficient* grace, favoured, however, with less graces than were lavished on Corozain, &c.; still, as they had fewer opportunities and lights, and resisted less graces than the Corozainites, &c., their guilt was less, and their damnation and punishment shall be less intolerable.

23. "*Capharnaum.*" He apostrophizes Capharnaum, because He had chosen it as His usual place of abode; therefore, more favoured (ix. 1), or, because it was more corrupt than the other cities, owing to its wealth, population, and maritime position.

"*Shalt thou be exalted?*" &c. In St. Luke, it is read affirmatively (c. x. 15); but, the meaning of both readings is the same. Thou art now "*exalted,*" by My presence, miracles, preaching, more than by thy wealth and extensive commerce; shalt thou be always thus exalted and honoured? Thou shalt be lowered down to the lowest hell or, "*Thou art now exalted unto heaven*" (Luke x. 15), by thy pride in resisting My miracles and preaching; but thou shalt be laid low and reduced to the lowest state of

humiliation. Thou shalt be visited with heavier punishments, in proportion as thou hast resisted greater graces and blessings.

"For, if in Sodom," &c. The comparison with abominable Sodom, of execrable memory, whose excessive sinfulness and consequent dreadful punishment are so well known, heightens the guilt of the Capharnaïtes. Similar is the comparison instituted by Ezechiel between Jerusalem and Samaria. (xvi. 46-51, &c.)

"Perhaps" (ἄν) is not expressive of doubt. It is rather strongly affirmative (as in verse 21, ἄν μετανοήσαν, where it is left untranslated by the Vulgate). It means, it might assuredly have remained, or, it could have remained, to the present day, so far as the signal punishment inflicted by God, is concerned, because it would have done penance, it would have escaped the fire and brimstone from heaven, and so it might have remained to the present day, unless other natural or supernatural causes, such as the relapse of future Sodomites, into the sins of which their fathers repented, had interfered. "Perhaps," shows the uncertainty of the event; it might, or might not, have remained; but, so far as its signal destruction, for its grievous crimes at the time, was concerned, it certainly would have remained. "Perhaps," according to some, also shows the full liberty with which the Sodomites would have yielded to the impulses of Divine grace. "Nostro loquitur affectu," says St. Jerome, "ut hominis servetur arbitrium," or rather, it denotes that the preservation of Sodom would not be owing to physical or necessary causes, but to the free will of men, doing penance for sin. The Latin interpreter rarely renders *av*, *forte*. Hence, he generally passes it over, expressing the thing absolutely, as in verse 21, "*olim pœnitentiam egissent.*" The different questions raised on this passage touching God's *media scientia*, or His knowledge of future conditional matters, that never happened, need not be treated here, and are very properly relegated to treatises on Metaphysics.

24. The giant sinners of Sodom shall be punished less severely than the Capharnaïtes on the Day of Judgment.

TEXT.

25. *At that time Jesus answered and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.*

26. *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.*

27. *All things are delivered to me by my Father. And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him.*

28. *Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*

29. *Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls.*

30. *For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.*

COMMENTARY.

25. "*At that time.*" According to St. Luke (x. 21), this occurred on the return of the seventy-two disciples from their mission, and while they were boasting of the success that attended them, and of the miracles they wrought. From this, our Redeemer takes occasion to give expression to the following, and then He "*answered.*"

However, the word, "*answer*," is frequently used in the SS. Scriptures, when nothing in the form of a question demanding an answer, preceded; and merely means, to enter at once on some discourse. Here, then, it may be very probably connected with the foregoing denunciation of the Capharnaïtes, thus:—Jesus, considering within Himself the obstinate impenitence of the Capharnaïtes, &c., and the just judgment of God, withholding His lights and graces in punishment of their sins, consoles Himself with the thought, that such was according to the just dispensation of His Heavenly Father; and He exultingly bursts forth into acts of thanksgiving for His adorable dispensation. St. Luke says (x. 21), "*He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost*," and thus consoles Himself with the idea that His Father willed it so. "*Answering*," may also have relation to the thoughts passing in our Saviour's mind regarding this wonderful economy of God, and the obduracy of the Capharnaïtes.

"*I confess to Thee*," i.e., I praise Thee, I extol Thee, I give Thee thanks.

"*O Father*," of whom I am alone the eternal, consubstantial, well-beloved Son.

"*Lord of heaven and earth*," having supreme dominion over all creatures, angels, and men. It is not, therefore, from infirmity or weakness that He has not subdued the rebellious wills of the Capharnaïtes. The words also convey, that He can do as He thinks proper, in heaven and on earth; and that, therefore, any disposition He makes regarding His creatures, is supremely just and equitable.

"*Hast hid*," by not imparting powerful interior graces, and in punishment of their obstinate pride, withholding those lights which would efficaciously influence them to profit by the external graces of preaching, with which they were favoured.

"*These things*." These mysteries of grace and glory preached by our Redeemer and His Apostles.

"*From the wise and prudent*," viz., the Pharisees and others, who were endowed with human learning and abilities. These were the "*wise*," to whom St. Paul refers (1 Cor. i.), as rejected in the work of the Gospel; worldly *wise*, "*wise*" in their own conceits, haughty and proud, devoid of the humble docility necessary for embracing the faith.

"*And hast revealed them to little ones*," i.e., hast given Thy abundant, illuminating graces for embracing the difficult and abstruse truths of faith to the humble and the poor (the Greek for "*little ones*," *νηπίους*, means, infants), who, with the humble docility of children, embrace what is proposed to them.

These are the foolish, the weak, and the contemptible things, which God has chosen, to confound the wise, the strong, and the things of consideration in this world. (1 Cor. i.) Humble, unlearned fishermen, has He replenished with all knowledge, and placed on a level with the princes of His people.

But how could our Lord rejoice and praise his Father for having concealed these things from the proud? As a great evil, should it not be a subject for tears and sorrow? Resp. Thanks are not rendered precisely for having concealed these things; but, because, having concealed these truths from the wise, He was pleased to reveal them to the humble. Precisely, as it is said (Rom. vi. 17), "*But, thanks to God, that you were the servants of sin, but have obeyed*," &c., which means, thanks to God, that, having been formerly servants of sin, you have now obeyed, &c. He thanks His Father for having chosen men, like infants, and enlightened them to disseminate his faith, passing over the great ones of this world. Others say, thanks and praise are rendered for both. For, when "*He hides these things*," He shows His Justice; and when "*He reveals them to the little ones*," He displays His Mercy. The judgments of God, whether in the matter of Justice or Mercy, are ever equitable; ever deserving of praise

26. "Yea" (in Greek, *vai, nay*), briefly repeats the former acts of praise, and is strongly commendatory of the workings of God's adorable providence. "*I confess*," is here understood, to be repeated, as if to say: Again and again, I thank Thee, O Father, for this ordination of Thy adorable providence, which is to be ever praised and glorified.

In all things, therefore, coming from the hands of God, we should humbly bow down and give Him thanks, and from our inmost heart, conform to His adorable will, saying always, even when things go against us, "*Fiat voluntas tua sicut in celo*," &c. "*Ita, Pater, quia sic placitum fuit ante te*." "*Fiat, laudatur et superexaltetur in æternum, justissima, altissima et amabilissima voluntas Dei in omnibus*." God wills it, no further inquiries, reasoning, or murmurings about it.

27. Lest it might be imagined, from our Lord's thanking His Father, for having revealed the mysteries of grace to the little ones, &c., that Christ Himself had not this power, He adds, "*all things*," all power, all dominion, all knowledge, &c., were communicated to Me "*by My Father*," at My Incarnation. Others say, at My eternal generation. These interpretations, however, amount to the same; or, rather, the latter is included in the former. Since it is from His eternal generation, that the gifts bestowed on Him at His Incarnation flowed, therefore, if "*My Father*" be omnipotent and omniscient, so am I; and I can, therefore, reprobate or save. The mysteries of grace and glory have been concealed by My Father, and also by Me, from the wise, and imparted to the humble.

"*And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father*." This may regard *comprehensive*, perfect, natural knowledge. This the Son also has, and the Holy Ghost. As the words, "*and he to whom it shall please the Father to reveal Him*," although not expressed here, because they are included in verse 25, "*has revealed*," &c., are still implied, if we look to the words, "*and to whom it shall please the Son to reveal*," it is better to understand it of the knowledge of the Father, known from *revelation*, as it is only of such knowledge, man is capable; such knowledge alone can be communicated to him.

"*Neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him*." These latter words are not expressed above, regarding the Father; because, *revelation* was before attributed to the Father (v. 25), and, moreover, it is through the Son that God the Father reveals Himself and the Godhead to the world. "*Manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus*," &c. (John xvii. 6.) The equality of the Son with the Father is shown here. For, He knows all regarding the Father, as the Father does regarding Him, which is put more strongly by St. Luke (x. 22), "*And no one knoweth who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is but the Son*." Again, "*the Son reveals it to whom He pleases*." The Holy Ghost is not included, since the exceptive or exclusive words applied to one Person of the Trinity do not regard the other Divine Persons, who possess equally the Divine nature. They only regard creatures. No one knows the mysteries regarding the Father, nor those regarding the Son, except those to whom they may be pleased to reveal them. Hence, when the Father reveals (v. 25), the Son also reveals. St. Chrysostom observes that the words, "*to whom it shall please the Son to reveal*," show the Son to be equal to the Father in power and dominion. For, although Christ reveals as man, and through His human nature, still, this nature subsists in a Divine Person; and this man, Christ is God also, and as God, equal to the Father. Others connect the words of this verse with the following verse, "*come to Me*," &c. As all power of saving, all dominion, all knowledge, have been communicated to Me by My Father, to be imparted by Me to whomsoever I please, I do, therefore, invite you all to "*come*," &c.

28. "*Come to Me*," approach Me, with the proper dispositions of faith, hope, devotion, &c., with a desire to observe all My precepts, who am equal to the Father in all things, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, to whom all things were delivered by My Father, having, therefore, at My disposal the dispensation of every good gift, including the perfect liberation from all evils incident to human life; "*all you that labour*," &c., groaning under the intolerable burden of sin, and its concomitant evils, viz., the tyranny of concupiscence and your corrupt passions, the remorse of conscience, and the dread of the fearful punishments of sin; and who, moreover, are groaning under the yoke of the Mosaic law.

"*And I will refresh you*." The Greek word for "*refresh*" (*αναπαύω*), means, *rest, cessation* from trouble. Hence, the words signify: I will grant you *respite* and *rest*; *respite* from your temporal miseries, and vexatious sufferings, which I shall temper for you, by granting you grace to bear them patiently; *rest*, from the burdensome uneasiness ever attendant on sin, and the consequent remorse, with dread of punishment, by remitting them; *rest*, also, from the intolerable yoke of Mosaic ceremonies, which neither you nor your fathers, could bear (Acts xv. 10). So that all are sweetly invited, without exception: *Gentiles*, whose burden of temporal miseries He alleviates, whose sins, both as to guilt and eternal consequences, He remits; and *Jews*, whom, in addition to the foregoing benefits, He frees, from the galling yoke of the Mosaic ceremonial law.

29. "*Take My yoke upon you*." "*My yoke*," in opposition to the yoke of the Mosaic law; and the heavy yoke of sin, concupiscence, and its consequences, under which you have been hitherto groaning, placed on your shoulders by your former spiritual taskmasters.

"*My yoke*," which you will not be left to bear *alone*, which I shall help you to carry. "*My yoke*," which I bore before you, and gave you an example to carry. By "*yoke*," is meant the law of the Gospel in all its parts, called a "*yoke*," because, like every other law, it binds us to certain duties, and forbids us to transgress certain limits. It is also called a "*burden*," because, we are obliged to bear it, to live according to it, and to fulfil it. It consists in bringing the *Intellect* into the captivity of *faith*, and the *Will* into the captivity of *obedience*, so as to observe all His commandments.

"*And learn of Me, because I am Meek*," &c., which some thus interpret: Among the virtues and precepts inculcated in My Gospel, there are two virtues in particular, which I am specially desirous you should learn of Me, as your Divine Master. These are, humility and meekness. These are the special virtues, which shall serve as the surest means of procuring perseverance in bearing My sweet yoke; which alone can secure that desirable peace and rest surpassing all understanding. It is to pride and the angry desire of vengeance—vices, the opposite of humility and meekness—that all the miseries of this world are to be attributed. These are the virtues which we can imitate our Lord in cultivating, and from which no one can be dispensed. This is the interpretation of St. Augustine: "*Discite a me non mundum fabricare, non cuncta visibilia et invisibilia creare . . . sed quoniam mitis sum et humilis corde*." Our Lord tells us to copy after Himself in the practice of these virtues in particular (Serm. 69).

Others, with Maldonatus, &c., say, the meaning is: Take upon you My yoke, &c.; be not afraid of approaching Me, be your unworthiness and sinfulness what it may; rather, come with confidence, and *learn*, from your experience of Me, *that* I am not, like the Scribes and Pharisees, a haughty, morose, repulsive tyrant, to scare you

away; but, on the contrary, a meek and gentle master, who will receive you with the greatest kindness and benignity, with truly humble condescension and affability.

This latter interpretation would seem to accord better with the context. For, the words of this verse would seem to be but a fuller explanation and development of the subject of the preceding verse (28). "*Come*" (v. 28), by your dispositions of heart to observe My law and obey My will and ordinances, is more fully expressed in the words of this verse, "*Take up My yoke upon you.*" "*To Me,*" who will not repel you; "*because, I am meek and humble of heart,*" gentle, kind in My government and intercourse, and you will find Me to be such. "*And I will refresh you*" (v. 28), is the same as, "*you will find rest to your souls.*" (The Greek for "*refresh*" and "*rest,*" is the same, ἀναπαύω). This rest, this refreshment, results not from the observance of the precepts regarding meekness and humility of heart merely, although these form a portion of God's law very effectual for begetting peace and rest; but, from bearing the "*yoke*" of Christ in its fulness, embracing the observance of all His commandments, the love of God and our neighbour, all that regards faith and morals. This is quite clear from the words of Jeremias (vi. 16), to which our Lord here manifestly alludes, also from Ecclesiasticus (li. 34, 35).

30. If we adopt the interpretation of St. Augustine, given above, then the words will mean; by practising the virtues of meekness and humility, after His example, which are the surest means for enabling us to take up the yoke of Christ, and observe all His other precepts, we will be sure to enjoy peace of soul, because, they shall divest the yoke of Christ, or, the observance of His commandments, of bitter, galling irritation—the effect commonly produced by a "*yoke.*" They shall render the observance of God's commandments, neither galling nor irritating; on the contrary, they shall beget in their observance, feelings of sweet benignity and contentment; and as a burden is oppressive from its weight, they shall render this "*burden*" "*light*" and easy to be carried, "*and His commandments are not heavy*" (1 John v. 3).

In the latter interpretation, the words of this verse are a proof, that they would find rest for their souls, in approaching Christ, in experiencing His meekness and humility, and in carrying "*His yoke,*" as explained above.

The "*yoke*" of Christ, far from galling or irritating, is "*sweet,*" comparatively, if contrasted with the yoke of the Mosaic law, "*which neither they nor their fathers could bear;*" and with the "*yoke*" of sin, and the slavery of the devil, which, though sweet and gratifying to corrupt nature, still leaves behind it bitterness, remorse of conscience, and ultimately plunges men for ever into hell.

It is "*sweet*" in itself, and "*light,*" because, His law is perfectly in accordance with the natural law, which the Gospel, with the mere addition of some positive precepts, more fully developes. Again, it is mild in regard to sinners, and has removed the rigorous punishments of the Old Law. Again, it carries with it abundant help and graces, not given in the Old Law, for self-fulfilment, and holds out promises the most consoling and abundant, of the fulfilment of which it gives us a sure earnest and foretaste here in the peace of God, which it bestows, exceeding all understanding. Finally, it proposes love and charity, as the sweet motive of our actions, and not, like the Old Law, the servile fear of punishments. "*Ubi amatur, non laboratur; aut si laboratur, labor amatur*" (St. Augustine).

CHAPTER XII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of how our Lord's disciples, passing through the ripe corn-fields, plucked a few ears, to appease hunger, which gives an occasion to the Pharisees to accuse them of violating the Sabbath (1-2). Our Lord vindicates their mode of acting, on several grounds—on the ground of necessity, as illustrated by the conduct of David (4-5); on the ground of their ministering to their Lord, which would justify a material departure from the law, in regard to what would be necessary for that purpose, as in the case of the priests sacrificing on the Sabbath; on the ground of being engaged in acts of the greatest spiritual mercy, which should be preferred to any external observances (6-7); on the ground of being dispensed by Him, the Sovereign Lord of all things (8). He cures a man with a withered hand, and triumphantly vindicates His line of acting, against the malevolence of the Pharisees (9-13). Returning to the sea-side, He performs several cures, and charges the persons cured to say nothing of it; thus, by His meekness and humility, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah regarding Him (14-21). He cures a deaf and dumb demoniac, and elicits the admiration of the people, which provokes the Pharisees to blasphemy, when charging Him with communication and collusion with Satan (22-24). Our Redeemer, knowing their thoughts on this subject, shows the utter absurdity of charging Him with collusion with Satan. This He shows on several grounds (25-30). He points out the grievous nature of the blasphemy they were guilty of (31-32), the inconsistency of their judgments, their evil dispositions (34-35), and the severe account they were to render one day for their sinful words (36-37). His reply to the Scribes, demanding a still greater proof of His power, and the heavy judgments of condemnation in reserve for them (38-42). He next points out the wretched spiritual condition of the Pharisees, and the misfortunes sure to overtake them. To illustrate this, He applies to them the example of the wretched man, into whom a troop of devils re-enter, after having been before banished from his heart (43-45). We have an account of a message sent Him by His Blessed Mother, and relatives who came from Nazareth to Capharnaum to see Him, and His description of the spiritual relationship, which He most prized, of which His immaculate Mother was the most perfect type and pattern (46-50).

TEXT.

AT that time Jesus went through the corn on the sabbath: and his disciples being hungry, began to pluck the ears, and to eat.

2. *And the Pharisees seeing them, said to him: Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days.*

3. *But he said to them: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him:*

4. *How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the loaves of proposition, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him, but for the priests only.*

5. *Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple break the sabbath, and are without blame?*

6. *But I tell you that there is here a greater than the temple.*

7. *And if you knew what this meaneth: I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: you would never have condemned the innocent.*

8. *For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*At that time.*" This form of words is frequently found in the Gospels, to refer, in merely a general way, to the period of our Redeemer's preaching and public mission, without specifying any particular time, or marking out any connected order of events. From Mark (ii.) and Luke (vi.) it seems quite clear, that the events recorded here by St. Matthew, occurred before the mission of the Apostles (x).

"*Went through the corn,*" that is, the corn-fields, where the corn was ripe for the sickle.

"*On the Sabbath.*" The word, "Sabbath," literally means, *rest*, in allusion to the rest of God, after perfecting the works of creation. (Heb. iv.) It commonly denotes the seventh day, specially appointed, in the Jewish law, to be kept holy, and free from servile works of any kind (Exod. xxxv. 3). It also was intended to denote all feasts among the Jews, and was employed, too, to designate the entire week. Hence, the words, first, second, third, &c., days of the *Sabbath*.

Here, the word would seem to be taken in its strict signification, as denoting the seventh day of the week, which, by a perpetual law, whether from creation, or, at least, from the time of Moses, was appointed to be kept "*holy*." That it refers not to the great festivals, or the days of the week, seems very probable, from the fact, that it was allowed, on these festival days, to prepare meat, &c.; and, hence, the Pharisees would have no ground for accusing our Redeemer's disciples, which, with all their malice, they would hardly do, if the letter of the law was not infringed upon; and, although our Redeemer's reply does not expressly admit, that the letter of the Jewish law was violated by His disciples,—He does not openly say, that pulling of ears of corn was a servile work,—still, it indicates that His disciples did what was justified only by the necessity of the case. It was only on the *Sabbath*, strictly so called, such mode of acting was unlawful.

St. Luke (vi. 1), terms it, "*the second first Sabbath.*" What this "*second first*" means is much disputed. Some understand by it, a Sabbath on which another great festival had fallen, or with which such a festival *concurrent*. So that it was doubly solemn—doubly a day of rest. "*Secundo,*" i.e., *bis primum* (St. Chrysostom). And, as it was a time when the ears of corn were ripe, it must be either the Pasch, or its seventh day (for, the seventh day of the Pasch was a solemn festival), or Pentecost. According to some, it was at the Paschal time; for, then the sheaf of first fruits was usually presented (Lev. xxiii. 10). And at the Feast of Pentecost, that is, full seven weeks after the Pasch (Lev. xxiii. 15), they were to offer two loaves of the first fruits (Lev. xxiii. 17). Hence, it must fall on either Pasch or Pentecost; for, with these only could the season of ripe corn correspond. The feasts of new moons were only festivals in the temple, but not of obligation among the people.

Others say, that the word, "*second first*" (δευτεροπρώτη—*secundo-primo*), means, the Sabbath that concurred with the Feast of Pentecost, or fell within the week of Pentecost, which had no octave, like the Pasch (which had seven days), or the Feast of Tabernacles (which had eight days), and it was called "*second first*" or *first*, in the second place; because, the Sabbath that fell within the week of the Pasch, was *first first*, or πρωτοπρωτον, or, absolutely, the first of all the great Sabbaths of the year. Hence, St. John says of it, "*it was a great Sabbath day*" (John xix. 31). So that as the Pasch was the greatest of all festivals, the Sabbath that fell within the Pasch was the greatest, or *first first*, Sabbath; and as Pentecost was the second greatest festival, so the Sabbath that fell within it was next in dignity to the Sabbath within the Pasch. Hence, "*second first.*" The three great festivals were termed, *πρωτα*, or *first*. Pasch had the πρωτοπρωτον, the *first first* Sabbath, by excellence. Pentecost, δευτεροπρωτον, the *second first*. Tabernacles, the third, τριτοπρωτον. Others, by *second first*, understand the octave day of the festival having an octave, which, it was commanded, should be celebrated with solemnity equal to that of the feast itself (Lev. xxiii.; Num. xxix. 35).

"*Sabbath.*" St. Mark (ii. 23), has the *plural*, and so has the Greek here,

τοῖς σαββάτοις, *on the Sabbaths*, which, by a Hebrew idiom, is used for the *singular*, and means, on one of the Sabbath days.

"*And His disciples being hungry.*" Very likely, owing to the concourse of the multitude, they forgot to make any provision for their corporal wants.

"*Began to pluck the ears,*" &c. St. Luke says (vi. 1), "*they rubbed the ears in their hands.*" It was allowed the Jews to do this, when passing through their neighbour's field (Deut. xxiii. 25). This whole passage indicates the austere and mortified life led by our Redeemer and His disciples, who were content with the simplest fare, with what came next to hand, sometimes suffering the pangs of hunger, poor, without scrip or staff. It contains a clear refutation of the implied charge, made against our Lord and His disciples, on the subject of not fasting (ix. 14; Luke v. 33). Hence, the occurrence recorded here, is narrated by St. Mark (ii. 23), after the charge referred to.

2. The Pharisees do not make it a charge, or subject of accusation, against our Lord's disciples, that they plucked the ears of corn, or were guilty, in any way, of theft. Their charge is confined to the violation of the Sabbath, as if this was a servile work, included in the prohibition of the law.

"*Said to Him.*" St. Luke, "*said to them.*" Probably, they charged both *Him* and *them*; or, it may be said, that in reproaching our Redeemer with the act of His disciples, they charged *Him*, at the same time. It was not for walking on the Sabbath, they reproached them. A walk to a certain distance was allowed on the Sabbath. The law permitted "*a Sabbath-day's journey.*"

3. Our Redeemer adduces several reasons to exculpate, or justify, the conduct of His disciples; the first is, the plea of necessity. A law of a higher order, and of more binding force, the law of Nature, which prompted them to sustain life and appease the pangs of hunger, predominated over the positive enactment regarding the abstention from servile work on the Sabbath. He quotes the conduct of David—a man according to God's own heart—which had the sanction and approval of the high priest at the time, as a case in point.

"*Have you not read,*" in which He reproaches them with their ignorance of the Sacred Scriptures, their knowledge of which they made a subject of boasting.

"*What David did.*" (See 1 Kings xxi. 1-6.)

"*And they that were with him.*" From the passage referred to (v. 1), it would seem David was alone. "*Why art thou alone,*" says Achimelech, "*and no one with thee?*" The answer is, that David was alone when he went to Achimelech ("*and no one with thee*"); but that he brought the holy bread to his attendants, whom "*he appointed to such and such a place*" (xxi. 2).

4. "*How he entered into the house of God.*" This was at Nobe. It does not mean the temple which was not then built, but the place, or hall, contiguous to the *Tabernacle*, which was kept at Nobe, a sacerdotal city (1 Kings xxii. 19). The ark was not there; it was kept at Silo. St. Mark (ii. 26) says, this occurred "*under Abiathar the high priest.*" In the first Book of Kings (xxi. 1), Achimelech is said to be the high priest in question. Some expositors, with St. Chrysostom (Hom. 40, in Mattheum), Theophylact, Jansenius, &c., undertake to reconcile both accounts by saying, that Achimelech, the father, and Abiathar, his son, had each the two names. So that each was called Achimelech and Abiathar. For (2 Kings viii. 17), it is said, that when David mounted the throne, Achimelech, the son of Abiathar, was high priest

with Sadoc, the son of Achitob. Now, by Abiathar here, is meant he who is called Achimelech (1 Kings xxi. 1). For, Achimelech, the father, was slain by Saul (1 Kings xxii. 18); and his son, Abiathar, was high priest during the whole of David's reign, and during a part of Solomon's. Hence, by Achimelech, is meant Abiathar; and so, both had the two names in common.

Others, with Venerable Bede, Cajetan, &c., say, Abiathar was present and sanctioned the act; and, so made it his own. Likely, he was associated with his father in the priestly functions, which old age prevented him from fully exercising.

Others say, the words, "*under Abiathar*," should be rendered, "*in the chapter called Abiathar*;" because, the Jews divided the SS. Scriptures into parts, and called the parts from the principal person spoken of in them. Thus, "*in Elias*" (Rom. xi. 2), means, the part called "*Elias*."

"*And did eat the loaves of proposition*," called in Hebrew, "*bread of the face*," because, placed in the *Holy*, in the Tabernacle, six on each side, before the face or throne of God, which was in *Holy of Holies*. These breads, corresponding in number with the twelve tribes of Israel, served as a constant memorial, and perpetual recognition, on the part of the Jewish people, that they were continually fed and supported by the Lord.

"*Nor for them that were with him*." David, although a king and a prophet—and as such entitled to extraordinary privileges—had no privilege whatever, any more than his attendants had, to partake of this holy bread. The privilege of partaking of it was exclusively reserved for the priests.

The argument from David's case is very strong. First, not only did David himself partake of these breads, but so did also his followers; and the high priest had no scruple in giving them, under the circumstances of necessity. Secondly, there seems to be greater deordination for *laics* in partaking of holy bread, which *priests* alone were allowed to eat, than in working on the Sabbath; and if necessity justified, or excused, the former, how much more the latter.

5. He adduces another, and still clearer, example, to show that His disciples did not act unlawfully, as was alleged.

"*Read in the law*," of Moses. (The fact of David might be referred to *the Prophets*.)

"*That on the Sabbath-days, the priests*," &c. This is not expressly said in the law; but, it is substantially contained in several parts of it, *e.g.*, Numbers (xxviii.) and elsewhere, where the rite of sacrificing, which necessarily involves great servile labour, in slaying, burning, offering the victims, is sanctioned.

"*How that on the Sabbath-days the priests*," &c. Every word is expressive—the time, "*Sabbath-days*;" the place, "*in the temple*;" the persons, of all others, who should be most observant, "*the priests*."

"*Break*," a stronger phrase than, *observe* not. They did so *materially*; but, still, they acted, according to the precepts of the law.

"*And are without blame*." The law itself allowed, in this case, this apparent departure from its general enactments. The act of *sacrificing*, &c., was, *per se*, a servile act. But it was allowed by the law; otherwise, it would be against the general provisions of the law of Moses.

6. They might object, and say: You are no priest; nor is the work done for the service of the temple. He replies, and shows how the alleged example of Sabbath breaking in the temple applies in the present case. If the sanctity of the temple excused those who laboured in its service, how much more will ministering to, and waiting upon, the Lord of the temple, excuse those who are employed in this

meritorious office. If the service of the temple justified the priests in violating the letter of the law, how much more can I, who am still greater than the temple, nay, the Lord of the temple, to serve whom is still more meritorious, dispense My disciples from the Sabbatical law, while attending on Me. In this unavoidable attendance on Him, His disciples were excused as much, by so doing, as were the priests of the Old Law, in sacrificing, owing to their unavoidable attendance at the temple, on the Sabbath. This is an *argumentum a minori ad majus*. The law relating to the observance of the Sabbath, admits of the interpretation, or rather limitation, that it does not extend to the labours of the temple. For, the priests in the temple perform works which, *in se*, and looking to the mere letter of the law, would seem to be a violation of the Sabbath. And, still, they are excused; because, they perform works prescribed by the Legislator Himself on the Sabbath. How much more ought My disciples be blameless, when, merely plucking a few ears of corn, to appease hunger, while ministering to Me, who am Lord of the temple.

7. Another reason to excuse His disciples. If the Pharisees properly understood the words of God, quoted by the Prophet Osee (vi. 6), I prefer mercy, *i.e.*, the exercise of humanity, and benevolence, and charity towards the poor, to sacrifice, and all other external observances, they would not have condemned the disciples, when in the exercise of mercy to the souls of their brethren, whom they wished to rescue from eternal perdition, they did what seemed to be a mere material violation of the letter of the law. Or, "*mercy*," might contain an allusion to the conduct of the Pharisees, who, devoid of all feelings of humanity and benevolence, were accusing the disciples, out of excessive zeal for the law. They were preferring sacrifice to mercy, which they failed to exercise. If the disciples, while suffering from hunger, were prevented from plucking a few ears of corn to appease hunger, this would be against charity and mercy; and if they gave over the sacred ministry, in obedience to ceremonial precepts, they would be preferring sacrifice to mercy. Had the Pharisees attended to this, they "*would never have condemned the innocent*" disciples.

8. "*For the Son of man*," &c. This is the final reason adduced to justify the disciples. They were dispensed by Himself, who, as Man God, "*was Lord even of the Sabbath*," and could dispense with its observance; or, could command it to be observed in what way soever He pleased.

"*Even of the Sabbath*," that is, of the Sabbath, as well as of everything else. "*Even*," is rejected by several MSS. The particle, "*for*," shows this to be an additional reason to prove the innocence of the disciples; *because*, they were dispensed by legitimate authority—viz., by Himself, "*the Son of man*," His peculiar designation in the New Testament.

St. Mark (ii. 27), adduces an additional reason: "*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*." The Sabbath rest was instituted for man's benefit and advantage, in order that he would be free, and obtain a respite from bodily labour, and might thus be at leisure to attend to God's worship, and meditate on His heavenly law and benefits, "*and not man for the Sabbath*." So that if man's corporal or spiritual necessity or utility required it, man would be free to dispense with the Sabbath observances and obligations. In a word, man's benefit, his life, his salvation, and whatever serves to forward both, being the end for which the Sabbatical rest was instituted, are, therefore, superior to it. Hence, whenever the *end* or *object* of the Sabbatical ordinances becomes incompatible with the observance of the Sabbath, or Sabbatical observances become injurious to man's corporal or spiritual

interests, these latter, as being more important, are to be consulted for in preference. St. Mark seems to make this (v. 8) an inference from the foregoing, "THEREFORE, the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." St. Luke (vi. 5), records them, as does St. Matthew here without making them an inference: "*And he said to them: The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.*"

Our Redeemer having, in four ways, excused His disciples, assigns *four* causes for transgressing a law. 1. Its opposition to the law of nature. 2. Its opposition to another particular and superior law. 3. Its opposition to *humanity* and love of our neighbour. 4. A dispensation from it by legitimate authority. (Jansenius Gandav.)

TEXT.

9. *And when he had passed from thence, he came into their synagogue.*

10. *And behold there was a man who had a withered hand, and they asked him, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days? that they might accuse him.*

11. *But he said to them: What man shall there be among you, that hath one sheep: and if the same fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not take hold on it and lift it up?*

12. *How much better is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the sabbath-days.*

13. *Then he saith to the man: Stretch forth thy hand, and he stretched it forth, and it was restored to health even as the other.*

COMMENTARY.

9. Luke (vi. 6) says, this occurred on "*another Sabbath.*" St. Matthew does not contradict this. The Jews were wont, on Sabbath-days, to assemble in their synagogues; our Redeemer entered their synagogue to teach, and He avails Himself of the occasion supplied by the Sabbath-day, to perform the miracle here recorded, for the purpose of confuting the error of the Pharisees, touching the observance of the Sabbath.

10. "*Withered hand,*" which St. Luke (vi. 6) says, was, "*his right hand.*"

"*They asked Him.*" St. Mark (iii. 4), and St. Luke (vi. 9), say, it was, *He* asked them. However, there is no contradiction. The questions are not the same. They ask Him, first, "*if it was lawful to HEAL on the Sabbath-days?*" and He, in reply, puts the question in a different form, to which they could not give an answer in the negative, viz., "*if it was lawful to do good or do evil; to save life, or to destroy, on the Sabbath-days?*" In this question of our Redeemer, it is conveyed, that to omit *saving* our brethren, when in great danger, is the same as *destroying* them; that such *omission* was *doing evil*. Unable to answer Him—for, it could not be denied that it was lawful to do good, also that it was lawful, "*to save life*"—"they (therefore) held their peace" (Mark iii. 4).

They put this question, not with a view of gaining information, but, "*that they might accuse Him,*" either of a violation of the law of Moses, in case He answered in the affirmative, or of inhumanity and cruelty towards a brother in distress, had He replied in the negative.

11. This is an argument, *a fortiori*. According to the admission and practice of the Pharisees themselves, it is lawful to rescue a sheep from drowning on the Sabbath-day; *a fortiori*, it must be lawful to rescue a man from death, or save him from suffering, especially when this latter operation involved no servile external work. For, the stretching forth of his hand by a sick man, was, surely, no servile

work, any more than the use of language, the utterance of a few words by our Redeemer.

If it be said, that there is no parity in both cases, as the life of the man, like that of the sheep, was not endangered; it can be said, in reply, that it was not so much saving the life, as preventing the loss of the sheep, the Pharisees looked to. Now, the illness of a human being, for even one day, was a greater evil than the loss of a sheep. Moreover, there was no servile work in the curing of the man's hand. It was a mere act of God's will, combined with the mere stretching out or extending of the man's hand.

12. As a man is far more valuable, far more excellent, than a sheep, it is, therefore, more allowable to cure him from bodily distemper, and rid him of pain, on the-Sabbath day, and, thus, "*do good*"—which comes to the same in reference to the present case—than to rescue a sheep from drowning or suffocation.

13. St. Mark (iii. 3), and St. Luke (vi. 8), inform us, that, before performing this miracle, our Redeemer instructed the infirm man to "*stand up in the midst*," and that the afflicted man, showing his confidence in our Redeemer's power, at once complied. This he did, probably, with a view of calling attention to the miracle He was about to perform; and of disarming the Pharisees, and of inspiring them with feelings of mercy, on beholding the misery of the infirm man, and of causing them to change the rash judgment that they had been forming in their minds regarding this miracle.

St. Mark (*ibidem*) also informs us, that, before performing the miracle, our Redeemer looked round about on them, with anger, doubtless, for the purpose of inspiring them with feelings of shame and repentance, "*being grieved for the blindness* (or, as the Greek word *πρωρις*, means, *hardness*) *of their hearts*." He then told the infirm man to stretch forth his hand, after which our Redeemer, by the sole operation of His almighty power, cures him, without even touching him; thus silencing all the cavils of His enemies, and not affording them the shadow of accusation against Him.

TEXT.

14. *And the Pharisees going out, made a consultation against him, how they might destroy him.*

15. *But Jesus knowing it, retired from thence: and many followed him, and he healed them all.*

16. *And he charged them that they should not make him known.*

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:*

18. "*Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul hath been well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the gentiles.*

19. *He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.*

20. *The bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not extinguish: till he send forth judgment unto victory.*

21. *And in his name the gentiles shall hope."*

COMMENTARY.

14. The fury of the Pharisees, far from being appeased by this work of mercy, performed by our Redeemer, was, on the contrary, provoked to the highest pitch.

Hence, being unable to make any reply, and having no ground of accusation, they go forth from the assembly, "*filled with madness*" (Luke vi. 11), and consult *with the Herodians* (Mark iii. 6)—who they were we shall see hereafter (xxii. 16)—as to the best means of destroying His reputation, and of taking away His life. Such are the extremes to which envy drives its unhappy victims.

15. Knowing their inmost thoughts, and wicked machinations, our Redeemer retires from thence, not from feelings of fear or weakness, but, "*because His hour had not yet come*," as He did on many similar occasions. In this He illustrated, by His own example, the precepts He inculcated on His Apostles (x. 23), that, *sometimes* we are bound to fly from the urgent persecutions of our enemies, and yield for a time to their obstinate malice. "*Retired from thence*;" "*retired to the sea*" (Mark iii. 7, 8).

"*And many followed Him*;" "*from Galilee and Judea, from Jerusalem and from Idumea, and from beyond the Jordan*" (Mark iii. 7, 8). "*And He healed them all*," i.e., all who were afflicted; "*and as many as had evils*" (Mark iii. 10).

16. "*And He charged them*." St. Mark says, it was the unclean spirits He strictly charged (iii. 12); but, as the demons were in the men possessed, it might be said, as here, that He charged the men whom He cured, "*not to make Him known*." This He did for a two-fold object, to avoid the imputation of vain glory, and to avoid further irritating the Pharisees.

17. "*That it might be fulfilled*." Our Blessed Redeemer, by thus meekly yielding to the fury of the Pharisees, and not contending with them in strength, fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias. "*That*," signifies, the *consequence* of our Redeemer's mode of acting to be, that the prophecy of Isaias was fulfilled. The design of the Evangelist, in referring to the prophecy of Isaias, most probably, was to bear witness to the great meekness of Christ, shown in His yielding to the fury of the Pharisees, and in His not wishing to irritate them by having His miraculous works proclaimed by those whom He cured. This proves He had the marks of the Messiah predicted by the Prophet.

18. This prophecy is read (Isaias xlii. 1). The reading of St. Matthew is different from that which obtains in either the Hebrew or the Septuagint. The first part of the quotation approaches nearer to the Hebrew reading, and the latter part, to the Septuagint.

"*Behold*," invites attention to the important prophetic oracle. "*My servant*." The Greek word, *παις*, would signify, either *son* or *servant*; but, the Hebrew word, *Hebed*, determines it to the signification of *servant*, and designates our Redeemer according to His human nature, in which "*He took upon Himself the form of a servant*" (Phil. ii. 7), and discharged in it the ministry of reconciliation.

"*Whom I have chosen*," singularly chosen, and loved from all eternity, preferably, to all other beings. The Hebrew for "*chosen*" is, "*I shall receive him*"—"suscipiam eum."

"*My beloved*," &c. (ὁ ἀγαπητός), the object of My eternal complacency, "*in whom My soul hath been well pleased*" (εὐδοκῆσεν); in other words, in whom all others please Me, and by whom I am reconciled with a sinful world.

The Septuagint reading of the words is, "*Behold, My servant Jacob, I shall receive (or, assume) him, Israel, My chosen one: My soul hath received Him*," as if this prophecy had reference to Jacob. But, the Jews themselves, as well as the Chaldaic Paraphrase, understood these words of the Messiah.

"*I will put My Spirit upon Him.*" The Septuagint and Hebrew have the past tense, "*I have put My Spirit,*" &c. But the change of tense makes very little difference in prophetic quotations. In these words, reference is made to the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost promised to Christ, and bestowed on Him: "*The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him; the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,*" &c. (Isaias xi. 2.) It was the same Spirit that descended on Him in the Jordan (iii. 16).

"*And, He shall show judgment,*" that is, what is just and equitable, and in accordance with the counsels and will of God; in other words, He shall make known the counsel and Gospel of God.

"*To the Gentiles,*" to the entire world; unlike Moses and the Prophets, whose ministry was confined to the Jewish people only.

19. "*He shall not contend.*" The Prophet now shows, *how*, "*He shall show judgment to the Gentiles,*" not by vociferously contending with His adversaries, nor by boastfully raising His voice abroad in public, like the haughty ones of the earth. This is the part of the prophetic quotation, which is specially referred to, as directly bearing on the subject in hand, viz., the great meekness and clemency of our Divine Redeemer. St. Jerome (Isaias xlii.), for, "*not contend,*" has, "*non clamabit*"—"not cry out;" and the word corresponding with "*not cry out,*" in the text, he renders, "*shall not have respect for persons*"—*neque accipiet personam*. The Hebrew words (*lo issa*), simply mean, either, "*neque accipiet*"—"nor shall he receive, or accept, which St. Jerome applies to exception of persons, or, *non tollet* (*he shall not raise*)", understood of raising his voice, in which sense the words are here taken by St. Matthew, and by the Chaldaic Paraphrast, a sense, too, of which, St. Jerome in his Commentary tells us, the words are susceptible.

"*In the streets,*" which is rendered by St. Jerome, "*abroad,*" "*foris.*"

20. "*The bruised reed—the smoking flax,*" &c. Most likely, this is a two-fold proverbial form of expression, conveying to us an idea of the great meekness and goodness of our Redeemer, who, far from crushing, or scornfully rebuking or oppressing those who are weak in virtue and Christian faith, would, on the contrary, meekly sustain, strengthen and encourage them, by His lenity and patience, and inflame them with Divine love. All this directly tends to point out the meekness of Christ, the object for which the entire prophetic quotation was adduced, here by St. Matthew. Others understand the force of the application of the proverbial expressions to have reference to the enemies of our Redeemer, who are as impotent, and as easily crushed as "*the bruised reed,*" &c., but whom He still mercifully spares, giving them full time for repentance. The proverbs of "*the bruised reed,*" and of "*the smoking flax,*" are very expressive; the former, conveying that it is only an object fit for trampling upon and throwing away; the latter, that, there is question of an object, which from its offensive smell, is only fit to be extinguished. Both convey very expressive images of great weakness and worthlessness.

"*Till He send forth judgment,*" &c., is understood by some (St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, &c.), thus: He shall meekly tolerate the Jews, until He victoriously demonstrates, that His judgment, exercised in their repulse and rejection was justly merited and provoked by their own sins and madness, in refusing to receive Him. St. Jerome understands it, of His enduring sinners during the term of this life, inviting them to penance, until He shall come in triumph to judge the world, when His past treatment of His friends and enemies shall be triumphantly justified, before the assembled nations of the earth.

Others, more probably, understand it thus, "*until*;" or, *so that*, by this manner of acting, by thus patiently treating His adversaries, His "*judgment*," which He came to announce to the Gentiles, shall be victoriously propagated and received all over the earth. Hence, it is added next, "*and in His name the Gentiles*," &c. The particle, "*until*," denotes, not so much limitation of time, as the event, the consequence. In Isaiah (xlii. 4) it is, "*until He set judgment in the earth*," which is, in sense, the same as the reading of the Evangelist. The Evangelist quoted the passage, partly from the Hebrew, partly from the Septuagint, omitting some parts from each, and quoting the sense of others, as suited his purpose.

21. "*And in His name the Gentiles*," &c. This is quoted literally from the Septuagint. In the Hebrew, it is different: "*For His law the Islands shall wait*." The sense, however, is the same in both; because, by "*the Islands*," are meant, not the Jews, but the Gentiles, living beyond the sea, far from Judea. St. Matthew and the Septuagint convey the sense. Some commentators say that, *ονοματι*, "*name*," is read instead of, *νομο*, *law*. But the meaning is not affected. For, those who wait for the law of Christ, place their trust in *His name*.

TEXT.

22. *Then was offered to him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, so that he spoke and saw.*

23. *And all the multitudes were amazed, and said: Is not this the son of David?*

24. *But the Pharisees hearing it, said: This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

25. *And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate: and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.*

26. *And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand?*

27. *And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.*

28. *But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.*

29. *Or how can any one enter into the house of the strong, and rifle his goods, unless he first bind the strong? and then he will rifle his house.*

30. *He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.*

31. *Therefore I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven.*

32. *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.*

33. *Either make the tree good and its fruit good: or make the tree evil, and its fruit evil. For by the fruit the tree is known.*

34. *O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things, whereas you are evil? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

35. *A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

36. *But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.*

37. *For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

COMMENTARY.

22. "*Then*," that is, about that time. The more probable opinion seems to be, that what is recorded in the remainder of this chapter (xii.) and c. xiii. took place before the mission of the Apostles, recorded (c. x. of St. Matthew). For, from Mark (vi. 14); Luke (ix. 7), it would seem, that what Matthew records (c. xiv.), occurred immediately after the mission of the Apostles, and after the wonderful works they performed while engaged in it (A. Lapide), so that the end of c. xiii. should be placed in order, before the mission of the Apostles. (c. x.)

"*Possessed with a devil*," &c. It is likely there is question here of the same, recorded in Luke (ix.), although Maldonatus thinks they are different, and that St. Luke records the miracle mentioned in St. Matthew. (ix.) St. Luke says, the "*devil was dumb*." However, he does not *deny* that he was "*blind*" also. Some say that this blindness and dumbness was not natural, but only caused by the demon, who impeded the use of the organs of sight and speech; and hence, when "*the devil*," called "*blind and dumb*," from his rendering the possessed man "*blind and dumb*," was cast out, the man at once "*spoke and saw*." Others say, the man was dumb and blind from nature, and was, moreover, possessed by a demon; so that the miracle produced a three-fold effect—restored his sight, his speech, and expelled the demon. This rendered the miracle more remarkable. "*So that he spoke*," &c. The ordinary Greek has, "*so that the BLIND AND DUMB man saw*," &c. The Vatican MS. has, "*the dumb man spoke and saw*."

23. "*The multitudes were amazed*," that is, transported with astonishment at the wonderful works they saw our Redeemer perform. "*And said: Is not this the Son of David?*" that is, the Messiah, so long promised to the Jews, under the distinctive character of "*the son of David*," to be born of his race.

24. The Pharisees, blinded with envy, and maddened into hatred of Christ, being unable to deny or gainsay the miraculous facts, with fiendish refinement and malignity, ascribe them to diabolical agency.

"*In Beelzebub*," &c. (See x. 25.)

25. "*Knowing their thoughts*," &c., the thoughts they gave utterance to among the people, and the motives and secret springs from which their words and thoughts, regarding Himself, proceeded, viz., envy, and a desire to bring Him into disrepute, and prevent the further extension of His kingdom.

"*Said to them*," mildly assigning reasons to prove that He had acted under the influence of no diabolical power, but by the power of God.

"*Every kingdom*," torn by intestine factions and discord, must necessarily fall. The same is true even of every city and private family. If the several constituent members of the city or family are engaged in mutual strifes, discord, and quarrelling, that city or family must soon come to an end.

26. "*And if Satan*," &c. Our Redeemer proceeds to show, by various arguments, the utter absurdity of the imputation, that His power was derived from Satan. In this verse, He applies to the case of the devil, or "*Satan*," the adversary of God and man, the general principle enunciated in the preceding. "*And*" (which means, "*now*") "*if Satan cast out Satan*," if one devil, vested with greater power and authority, violently and in a hostile manner eject another devil, as you suppose in the words, "*cast out*,"

and as you see Me do every day, then, "*he is divided against himself*;" and hence, his kingdom must fall. But, it is not to be supposed that this crafty enemy of God's kingdom, who exerts all his cunning, and employs all his subtlety for the extension of his own kingdom, and the reign of sin among men, could be betrayed into any course of action, subversive of this so much cherished dominion.

Our Redeemer supposes the ejection of one demon by another to be done violently, and in a hostile manner, which would, therefore, exclude all idea of collusion among the demons, as if one would permit himself to be cast out by another, for the purpose of confirming, by a miracle, some false doctrines. It is said of Apollonius Thyaneus, the notorious impostor, who made such noise in the world, in the first century of the Christian era, that he, among other wonderful things ascribed to him, cast out devils. This, if it occurred, was the result of collusion among the devils themselves. Our Redeemer cast them out violently; and He did so with the express and declared object of extending the reign of virtue, and the kingdom of God.

27. Another argument, to prove not only, that it was not by the power of the devil He cast out demons, as in the proceeding, but that it was by the Spirit of God He did so, by whose power "*their (own) children*" confessedly "*cast them out.*"

"*Your children.*" Some expositors, by this understand, the Apostles and disciples of our Redeemer, who cast out devils in His name. But, as our Redeemer spoke these words, very probably, before the Apostles performed miracles, and before their mission; and, moreover, as it was probable they, too, were as likely to be called Beelzebub as He was (x. 25), hence, the words are understood by others of the Jewish *exorcists*, who, by the invocation of God, expelled devils. Mention is made of these in the New Testament (Mark ix. 37; Luke ix. 49; Acts xix. 13, 14). We are informed by Josephus (Antiq. Lib. viii. c. 2), that Solomon instructed this class, by Divine authority, in the art of expelling demons. Josephus (*ibidem*) mentions an instance of the successful exercise of this power, by a certain Jewish *exorcist*, named Eleazar, in presence of the Emperor Vespasian, and his sons, and the entire army.

"*Therefore, they shall be your judges.*" St. Jerome, who understands, "*your children,*" of the twelve Apostles, understands these words of the judicial authority of the twelve, sitting on twelve thrones, to judge the tribes of Israel.

Others, more probably, understand them of a *judgment of comparison*, just as "*the Queen of the South shall rise in judgment,*" &c. (v. 42.) These *exorcists* will render it evident, that the Pharisees were influenced solely by inexcusable malignity against our Redeemer, whom they charge with performing His splendid miracles under the influence of diabolical agency, while they regard the same or less brilliant miracles, performed by their own children, as the result of Divine power. There could be no reason for ascribing the same act to God, when performed by their own children; and to the devil, when performed by our Divine Redeemer. This would show they were actuated by personal hatred and malignity. Hence, our Redeemer need not pronounce judgment against them; their own conduct, in regard to the different treatment shown "*their own children,*" condemns them.

28. This is an inference from the foregoing, the very opposite of what the Pharisees wished to deduce. They wished to infer that He acted under the power of Satan, for the purpose of extending Satan's kingdom. But our Redeemer infers, that having acted from the power of God, He did so to establish the kingdom of God.

"*By the Spirit of God.*" St. Luke (xi. 20) has, "*the finger of God,*" or, the power of God. Hence, the Pharisees exceeded the Egyptian magicians in obstinate incredulity; for, these cried out, on witnessing the miracles of Moses, "*this is the finger of God*" (Exod. viii. 19). The Holy Ghost is, in ecclesiastical language, sometimes termed, *the finger of God*; or, the power of the Almighty.

"*The kingdom of God is come upon you,*" that is to say, by the number and splendour of My miracles, and the ejection of the demons, in a *spiritual* sense, signified by the visible ejection of them from the bodies of men, it is clear the kingdom of Satan is assailed with unusual violence; and hence, that the kingdom of God is being established among them. Or, the words might mean, that our Redeemer, by these miracles, proved the truth of His own teaching, and that of the Apostles, and of the Baptist, when they announced, at the very outset, "*the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" "*Is come.*" The Greek word, *ἐφθασεν*, signifies, *to come by anticipation*, sooner than they expected. The Pharisees madly strove to oppose the extension of this kingdom.

29. This is another reason to prove our Redeemer did not act, from any power derived from Satan, or *under* his influence. He shows His own superior power, compared with that of Satan, having expelled him forcibly, and having carried his kingdom or citadel by assault. "*Or,*" *else, otherwise*, if it is not by the Spirit of God, I cast out devils, and if the kingdom of God has not come to you, how could it be possible for Me to forcibly dispossess Satan? In a war between rival and hostile chieftains, one cannot enter the other's house and plunder it, unless he first binds his adversary by the exercise of superior force. So, although Satan be "*strong,*" still, our Redeemer shows Himself to be "*stronger*" (Luke xi. 22), by forcibly expelling him everywhere from the bodies of the possessed; by disseminating His own doctrine, and destroying that of Satan. It is only the power of God that is superior to that of Satan; and hence, our Redeemer proves that He acts in the Spirit and power of God, when overcoming Satan. The devil is called, "*a strong man*"—"no power on earth to be compared with his" (Job xli. 24)—(see Ephes. vi; commentary on). "*His house,*" is either the *world*, where he exerted universal dominion, before the coming of Christ, or, *his kingdom*, which our Redeemer was destroying. "*His goods,*" or *vessels*, are, either the arms he employs to propagate and preserve this kingdom, such as pleasures, false maxims, &c.; or, rather, the miserable souls of men whom he held captive, and whom our Blessed Lord rescued from his grasp, and afterwards presented to His Father as so many trophies of victory. Our Redeemer shows in this verse, that He could not have acted in collusion with, or, as the friend of the devil, as they calumniously asserted; hence, He conquered him, and wrested from him his former possessions.

30. In this verse, according to some, is adduced a new reason, to show that our Redeemer did not act from the power of Satan, or in collusion with him, since Satan, far from being neutral, as regarded Him, was His declared adversary. It was a proverbial expression among the Jews, "*he that is not with one is against him,*" &c.; and our Redeemer declares, that this proverb is fully verified, and more than verified, in regard to Satan and Himself. For, Satan is, surely, *not with Him*; nay, indeed, he is manifestly *against* Him. The words of this verse, most likely, conveyed a proverb in vogue among the Jews. But, whether proverbial or not, and as such conveying a general truth, St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, Bede, St. Thomas, &c., understand the words to *refer to Satan*, who surely was not for Christ. Beelzebub and He propose opposite and conflicting things. He inculcates, by word and example,

humility, poverty, chastity, contempt of the world, and all virtues; Beelzebub, on the other hand, inculcates the opposite. Our Lord gathers men into the unity of faith, morals, religion, and finally into life eternal; Beelzebub, on the other hand, would "*scatter*" them into various idolatrous and wicked sects, and withdraw them from obedience and from giving glory to God.

Others apply the words to the Pharisees, against whom our Redeemer inveighs in this verse. They affected to be indifferent in regard to our Redeemer's doctrine and miracles, as if they were neither for nor against Him; and, therefore, qualified to act as impartial judges in His regard. Our Redeemer, then, tells them this affected indifference will not excuse them, or save them from the imputation of being His enemies. Hence, He tells them (v. 33), to be either one thing or the other, "*Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or the tree evil, and its fruit evil.*" The Pharisees were not for Him; they were, on the contrary, disposed to scatter to the winds all the fruits of His labours, His miracles, and preaching among the people. Against the probability of this latter interpretation it militates, that this saying, "*he that is not with me,*" &c., could not apply to the case of the Pharisees, who openly calumniated our Lord, and ascribed all His wonderful miracles to diabolical agency. Hence, the former interpretation would seem more tenable, if, in it, the words be not confined in their application to the devil, but be employed in a *general* sense to all, whether devils or men, who do not join our Redeemer in His warfare against the powers of hell, just as in a ruinous war, a king would have a *right* to call on all his subjects to give him active support; whoever would act a neutral part, should be regarded as enemies of their country.

The general assertion made here is not opposed to what is said (Mark ix. 39; Luke ix. 50), "*He that is not against you, is for you.*" For, in this latter place, our Lord speaks of external abstention from joining, or external constructive opposition; he that does not externally oppose you in your mission, as in the case of the man of whom the Apostles complain to Him (Mark ix.), for having performed miracles, without joining them, such a man not being in direct opposition to you, may be counted on your side. His works and doctrine are not opposed to yours; but, in reality he agrees with you, although, for some reason, he may defer his external profession. St. Ambrose (in Luke ix.), cites, as a case in point, Joseph of Arimathea and other occult followers of our Lord. But here (in St. Matthew), there is question of *internal heartfelt* opposition. Moreover, our Redeemer here speaks of those, who, as subjects, were obliged to help Him, such as the Pharisees and the Jews, who witnessed the proofs of His Divine mission, and, therefore, should receive Him; and by not doing so, they were hostile, just as a king's subjects, by exhibiting *neutrality* in certain pressing contingencies, when their active services are urgently demanded, may be fairly regarded, as opposed to him.

31. "*Therefore,*" is an inference derived from all the foregoing passage; as if He said: Since, then, it is manifest that I expel demons by the power of God, and not from any diabolical agency, as you may clearly have seen; "*I say to you,*" by ascribing works, so manifestly Divine in their source and principle, to the devil, you are guilty of "*blasphemy*" against the Holy Ghost, from whose power these works emanated—a most grievous sin, scarcely ever remitted.

By, "*blasphemy of the Spirit,*" is understood, not every sin against the Holy Ghost. For, there is question here of a sin by *words*, by *language*, as in next verse, language attributing works manifestly performed under the influence of God's Spirit, to the devil. Of course, under *words*, are included, thoughts and actions of

the same specific kind and tendency, "*every sin and blasphemy.*" Hence, He says *here*, "*shall not be forgiven men.*" Whatever interpretation of this passage may be adopted, it cannot, for a moment, be allowed to militate against the plenitude of power left to God's Church to forgive sins, be their number or enormity what it may. "*WHOSE SINS you shall forgive, they are forgiven*" (John xx. 23) No limitation as to *number*, or *kind*, or *enormity*. It is not said here, that the sin in question is *irremissible*, *cannot be forgiven*, but only, "*SHALL NOT BE forgiven*," that is, it is but rarely remitted, and with difficulty; just as it is said that, "*every blasphemy shall be forgiven men*," not that every sin of blasphemy is always forgiven; for, sometimes, men do not seek forgiveness, by repentance; but, that it is *easily* and *generally* forgiven. Hence, the opposite clause, means: Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not *easily* nor *generally* remitted, not for want of power in God or in the Church; but, for want of dispositions in the *subject*, who rarely is blessed with proper dispositions of penance, necessary for the remission of every mortal sin. The reason why those guilty of this sin rarely have the necessary dispositions, is, that they sin against the source of all grace and remission, the Holy Ghost, to whom, as being a work of Divine goodness, the giving of grace necessary for the remission of sin is, *by appropriation*, ascribed. Such persons are handed over to a reprobate sense, so that they become impenitent. St. Augustine, by "*blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*," understands, the heinous crime of final impenitence.

32. "*Against the Son of man*," which is generally understood, of speaking against our Lord in His human nature, calumniating Him in His human actions, such as that He was a glutton, the friend of publicans, &c.; or, calumniating the works He did, having the appearance of being violations of the Divine law, such as curing on the Sabbath, remitting sins, &c. Such a "*word shall be forgiven him*," *i.e.*, *without much difficulty*, and *generally* is remitted. Such a sin is extenuated by ignorance and the absence of malice. Ignorance can be pleaded in such a case, as was done by St. Paul, "*IGNORANS feci.*" St. Paul's ignorance, though culpable, was not directly voluntary.

"*But he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost*," by ascribing the known works of God to the devil, cannot plead ignorance in excuse. Although, such a man speaks at the same time against the Father and the Son; still, the insult is said to be specially against the Holy Ghost, because, certain effects of benignity and goodness, are *by appropriation*, ascribed to Him—although, like all operations, *ab extra*, common to Him with the two other Persons of the adorable Trinity—such as the works here calumniously spoken of, "*in spiritu Dei, ejicio demonia.*"

"*Shall not be forgiven him in this world, or the world to come.*" The words, "*in the world to come*," according to St. Augustine (De Civ. Lib. c. xxi. 13), and St. Gregory (Dialog. iv., c. 39, &c.), imply, the possibility of the remission of sin in the life to come; and, consequently, the existence of a middle state. For, no man in his senses would say "*I shall not marry in this world, or in the world to come*," because, the latter is absurd and impossible. Hence, a proof of Purgatory, where sin is remitted, or rather, satisfied and atoned for, as to the temporal punishment which, faith tells us, *sometimes* remains to be atoned for after the guilt of sin, and the eternal punishment it deserves are remitted.

Obj. St. Mark says, "*shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin*" (iii. 29). The meaning of our Redeemer's words, therefore, is he shall never be forgiven, either in heaven or in hell.

Resp. St. Augustine's argument is, that the words, "*in the world to come*," would

not be used in connexion with the words, "*in this world*," where sins are, and *can be*, remitted, unless they could be remitted in the world to come also. St. Mark only expresses briefly, what is more fully enlarged and explained in St. Matthew.

The remission of sin, "*in the world to come*," is, of course, not to be understood of the *guilt* of sin, which can be remitted only in this life; but, of its temporal punishment, as already explained.

33. Some commentators understand "*the tree*," of the Pharisees; and they say, the argument bears on verses 31, 32. Be consistent with yourselves; if you are good trees, and wish to be regarded as such, let your fruit or works correspond. Be good, not only in appearance, but in reality. He thus inveighs against their hypocrisy (Maldonatus). Then, in the words, "*make the tree good*," &c., is contained a precept to be good trees, and to produce good fruit. In the words, "*make the tree evil*," is contained a caution not to become such. (Jansenius Gandav.) Others understand it, of the devil.

The more probable interpretation understands, "*the good tree*," "and" "*good fruit*," of Christ; and the words, according to it, contain a fifth argument against the calumny of the Pharisees, which exposes their inconsistency, as if He said: Be consistent in your judgments and opinions. Say one thing or the other. Say that I am myself good, and my works good and worthy of commendation; and hence, that I cannot act from diabolical influences; or, that I am wicked and my works evil. Now, the best test for judging of any one are his works. "*For, by the fruit the tree is known.*" As my works, then are manifestly good; it follows, if you are not inconsistent with yourselves, and blinded by passion and envy, that you must pronounce Myself to be good also.

34. This answers either of the above interpretations. The first, thus: But, as you are *bad trees*, it is no wonder you do not speak good things. The latter, thus: But, as you are naturally bad, how can you speak with consistency? How can you speak otherwise than calumniously of Me? Of course, He only says, they cannot do so *naturally*. He does not deny the possibility of their doing otherwise, aided by God's grace. "*Generation of vipers*," is allusive to the old serpent; and also in it is contained an allusion to the boast the Jews indulged in, of being "*the seed of Abraham*." In reality, they proved themselves to be the seed of the old serpent—this first of calumniators against God. They proved themselves to be "*a brood of vipers*," *the malignant offspring of the most malignant parents*. Their deadly malignity and wickedness were chiefly manifested in calumniating and contradicting holy men. Hence, termed "*vipers*," the most noxious of animals, the most poisonous of serpents. Similar are the reproaches uttered, c. xxiii. 13, &c.

The words, "*how can you speak good things?*" &c., are similar to those of Jeremias (xiii. 23), "*If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard, his spots: you also may do well*," &c. The words express, not so much the *impossibility*, as the *great difficulty* of speaking or acting well. They also express what *usually* and *commonly* happens.

"*For, out of the abundance*," &c., a proverbial form of expression.

35. He explains more fully the meaning of the words, "*out of the abundance of the heart*"—"out of a good treasure," out of the accumulated treasures of thoughts and affections, with which the heart is filled, a man gives utterance to the same sentiments—be they good or evil.

36. This is generally supposed to be, an *argumentum a minori ad majus*. If an exact and rigorous account be demanded for an "*idle word*," what account is to be rendered for blasphemous, calumnious language, such as the Pharisees were guilty of in the present instance? By "*an idle word*" is commonly understood, a word that confers no benefit on the man who utters it, or on those to whom it is addressed. "*Quod sine utilitate loquentis dicitur aut audientis*" (St. Jerome). Obj. How can *venial* sins be punished "*in the day of judgment*," on which *mortal* sins alone are punished? Resp. We may understand the words of our Redeemer, of the *particular* judgment which occurs at the death of each one; or, if of the *general* judgment, then, we may say that the *wicked* shall be punished in hell, not alone for their mortal sins, but also, the recollection of their idle words and venial sins shall add to their torments; and that the *just*, who, already satisfied for their *venial* sins by penance here, or in Purgatory, shall render an account, in this sense, that their beatitude shall be less than it otherwise would be, had they not indulged in idle words and venial sins. (Jansenius Gandav.

37. "*For by thy words*," &c. Not that words only are to form the subject of future judgment. Our *works*, too, shall form a portion of the matter for examination. For, when "*manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, each one shall receive . . . according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil*" (2 Cor. v. 10), but that words alone would form ample grounds for declaring us justified, or for condemning us. No doubt, they shall form a considerable portion of the matter of our examination. "*Shalt be justified*," that is, declared, or pronounced to be just. This meaning is required by the words, "*shalt be condemned*," judged, declared to be condemned.

TEXT.

38. *Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying; Master, we would see a sign from thee.*

39. *Who answering said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.*

40. *For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.*

41. *The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here.*

42. *The Queen of the South shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon here.*

COMMENTARY.

38. "*Then some of the Scribes*," &c. After our Redeemer had, by the most cogent and convincing arguments, refuted the calumnies of those who charged Him with working miracles, under the influence of Satan, others amongst the Scribes and Pharisees, dissembling their rage and disappointment, and veiling their hypocrisy under the appearance of respect—"Master"—affect a desire to see more convincing proofs of His Divine mission, as the miracles He had hitherto performed were still called in question. "*We would see a sign from Thee*." St. Luke (xi. 16) says, that others, "*tempting, asked of Him a sign from heaven*," such as thunder and rain, out of the usual course of things, as exhibited by Samuel (1 Kings xii. 18); or, to bring fire from heaven, as was done by Elias, to consume the victims (3 Kings xviii. 38); or, like the same Elias, be taken up in a fiery chariot (4 Kings ii. 11); or cause manna to be

rained down from heaven, like Moses; or stop the sun in his midday course, like Josue. As if these wicked hypocrites would not devise means for evading the force of such miracles also. "Quasi," says St. Jerome, "non possent et illa calumniari." The men who asked for signs from heaven, are different from those who calumniated Him, as in the preceding (Luke xi. 16).

39. "*Who answering said to them.*" St. Luke conveys (xi. 29), that the multitude gathered round, in the hope of seeing some celestial prodigy, and when they were gathered round, then our Redeemer said, "*an evil*," a wicked, perverse, "*and adulterous*"—a faithless—"generation," race of men or people, who abandoning God, to whom they were espoused by the law, clung to the demon, and followed his suggestions, thus violating their marriage contract, by spiritual adultery and connexion with infidelity; or, "*adulterous*," may mean, *degenerate*, who have *degenerated* from the morals and piety of the Patriarchs, from whom they sprang. The word may also be understood, of adultery, in the literal sense, which was then very prevalent.

"*And a sign shall not be given it, but,*" &c. Did He not give many signs from heaven—the eclipse of the sun at His death, the voice from heaven? (John xii.) Yes; but not to these people who, with perverse minds, demanded it. "*Shall not be given it.*" Nor was a sign given, at their request, such as they demanded—viz., "*a sign from heaven*;" and the particle (*εἰμή*), *nisi*, except, will bear the meaning of *but* a sign will be given them, not from heaven, but from the very bowels of the earth, a sign which they cannot gainsay or misconstrue, the sign whereby I am proved to be "*the Son of God*" (Rom. i. 4); or, if the particle, *nisi* (*except*), be taken in its strict exceptive sense, then, it will mean, *except* the sign which I have already given them (John ii. 19), a sign prefigured in the prophet Jonas. Our Redeemer refers to the miracle of His resurrection, to remove the occasion of scandal, which the Jews would conceive from His ignominious death and Passion.

Maldonatus explains, "*sign*," in the second place; "*the sign of Jonas*," differently from the word, *sign*—"Seeketh a sign"—they seek a sign, for persuasion to induce them to believe, and thus to be saved; but, the sign they shall get, is one that shall be for their condemnation, as is explained (v. 41). However, the following (v. 40) is clearly against this interpretation

40. In this verse, is shown what is meant by "*the sign of Jonas the prophet*," which is given them, and how his condition, in what happened him, was a type of our Lord's resurrection. As Jonas was a *Jesus*, or Saviour to the Ninevites, so *Jesus* shall be a *Jonas* to the Jews.

"*Whale's belly.*" In the prophecy of Jonas, it is called, "*a great fish*" (ii. 1). It is perfectly idle to speculate to what species of marine monsters it belonged.

"*Three days and three nights.*" A paraphrase and exposition of three natural days of twenty-four hours, of which the integral parts are, day and night, light and darkness. This is a way of describing natural days, as distinguished from artificial days, during which the sun shines. By *synecdoche*, the parts of three natural days are put for whole natural days. Our Redeemer uses the phrase, "*three days and three nights*," to express natural days; because, such is the mode of expression used in reference to Jonas (Jonas ii. 1). Then, our Redeemer was *three natural days*, in this partial sense, in the bosom of the earth, if we adopt the Jewish custom of computing their civil days, viz., from sunrise to sunrise; (they computed their festivals from evening to evening), viz., a part of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and a part of Sunday, from early dawn to sunrise. Or, if we adopt the calculation of the Romans, who

probably introduced their civil calendar into Judea—from midnight to midnight—then, the same results; a portion of Friday, from His death till midnight; the whole of Saturday; a part of Sunday, from midnight till morning. It would seem, that the Jews adopted the Roman computation of time in civil matters, as we find the system of counting hours from watch to watch existing among them (Matt. xiv. 25). We have an example of computing natural days in a partial sense (Esther v. 1), where the Jews are told to “*fast three days and three nights* ;” and still, after part of these days, “*on the third day*,” Esther went to the king on the business, for the successful issue of which the fast was observed. Hence, our Redeemer is frequently said to “*rise on the third day*” (Matt. xvi. 22); and it is quite common in all languages, to say that a thing was done *after* three days, which was done *on the third day*. After three days you must appear, would mean, you must do so *on the third day*.

“*In the heart of the earth.*” This refers to the *Limbus Patrum*, called by St. Paul (Eph. iv. 9), “*the lower parts of the earth*,” to which He descended to preach deliverance to the saints therein detained captive (1 Peter iii. 19).

41. After instituting a comparison between Himself and Jonas, and between the Jews and Ninevites, our Redeemer points out the different fruits resulting from Jonas’s preaching and His own; and He thus shows, in the clearest light, the obstinacy of the Jews.

“*The men of Nineve shall rise in judgment*,” that is, shall be witnesses against the Jews. The word, “*rise*,” contains an allusion to the usage, which then prevailed, to have witnesses to give testimony in a standing posture.

“*And shall condemn it*,” not that they shall act as judges; but, by a judgment of contrast or comparison, they shall show, by their penance and good works, that the obstinate and incredulous Jews shall be justly condemned.

“*They did penance.*” Although the Greek word, “*μετενοησαν*,” strictly speaking, only means, a change of heart; still, we know that their penance, which is here commended by our Redeemer, involved acts of the austere penitential severity and rigour (Jonas iii. 6, 7, 8); and, it was, when “*God saw their works, that He had mercy on them*” (v. 10). (See p. 39.)

“*A greater than Jonas.*” Jonas was but a servant; Christ, the Master; Jonas, a creature; Christ was God.

42. Another example to show the same. “*The Queen of the South*,” some country south of Judea. She is called “*the Queen of Saba*” (3 Kings x. 1), of which Saba, some say, Saba, in Arabia Felix; and she might be said to come from “*the ends of the earth*,” as Arabia Felix is the farthest off point of land in that quarter, being bounded by the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. Others understand Saba, the chief city of the island Meroe, in Ethiopia, which Cambyses called Meroe, after his sister of that name. It is said, that the queens of Meroe were named *Candaces*, as the Egyptian monarchs went by the name of *Pharaoh*. Hence, the Ethiopian belonged to the Queen of Ethiopia, whom Philip found reading the SS. Scriptures (Acts viii.), which were introduced into that country since the return of this queen from the court of Solomon.

“*A greater*” (πλειον), *something greater*. The neuter gender is used as a mark of humility; or, as agreeing with *sign* (σημειον). Out of humility, He speaks of Himself in the third person. The contrast is very striking. A woman undertakes a distant, laborious journey to see the wisdom of a mere man. Here, we have the *God of heaven*

coming to preach a kingdom to the Jews, bringing it home to their very doors; and they reject and spurn it.

TEXT.

43. *And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none.*

44. *Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.*

45. *Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation.*

COMMENTARY.

43. St. Luke (xi. 24) records this parable, as also the exclamation of the woman, who pronounced the parent of our Redeemer happy (v. 46), before our Redeemer's refutation of the calumnies of the Pharisees, referred to in the preceding, ascribing His miracles to diabolical agency. But, as St. Matthew is more exact in following the order of events, it is better to adopt the order which he follows.

43-45. The whole parable is given in these three verses, as well as its application. "*So shall it be also to this wicked generation.*" The Pharisees charged our Redeemer with being possessed by a devil, and with acting under his influence. Our Redeemer, after refuting this gross calumny, now wishes to inspire the proud, impenitent Pharisees with salutary fear, by describing their wretched spiritual condition, and the misfortunes which are sure to overtake them. He, at the same time, conveys, that they, and not He, are under the power of the devil.

"*An unclean spirit.*" The devil, who prompts and instigates to acts of impurity and sin. "*Is gone out of a man.*" being expelled by God's powerful grace, either in baptism or penance. "*He walketh through dry places.*" St. Luke has, "*places without water*" (xi. 24). (The Greek, however, is the same in both, *τόπων ἀνύδρων*). This is said of the demon, ascribing to him the feelings of men, or, in accommodation to the notions of the Jews regarding the haunts of demons—generally supposed to reside in waterless deserts, and this notion is warranted by Scripture (Tobias viii. 3)—and of persons possessed, who never are at rest. "*Seeking rest, and findeth none.*" Some understand, "*dry places,*" to refer to persons of mortified habits, not enervated by luxury, whom the demons assail in vain, without gaining admittance.

44. "*Findeth it empty,*" useless; unoccupied by God, who no longer makes it His abode.

"*Swept and garnished,*" destitute of virtue, piety, or Divine grace, filled with pride, furnished with the ordure of sin, in which the unclean spirit finds delight.

45. To render his hold more lasting and secure, he takes back with him an indefinite number of devils, represented by the number, "*Seven.*"

"*And the last state of that man is worse,*" &c. This is a proverbial form of expression (see 2 Peter ii. 20, 21; Hebrews xii. 4).

"*So shall it be also to this wicked generation.*" This is the application of the foregoing similitude, as if He said: It shall happen this wicked generation, as happens a demoniac, from whom a devil is expelled, and into whom, a whole legion of demons afterwards enter, rendering his last condition infinitely worse, and more deplorable

than the first. Our Redeemer conveys to the Jews, that having been freed from the tyranny of Satan by the law, segregated from all the nations, and especially cared by God's providence, they now, by their sins, their obstinacy and resistance to God's grace, provoke against themselves a heavier judgment of impenitence, and shall continue irretrievably under the dominion of Satan. No doubt, the example has a more *general* application. It is applicable to every relapsing sinner, and clearly represents his miserable spiritual condition. But it is specially intended for the Jewish people, as is clear from the application made by our Lord, "*So shall it be also to this wicked generation.*"

TEXT.

46. *As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him.*

47. *And one said unto him : Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee.*

48. *But he answering him that told him, said : Who is my mother, and who are my brethren ?*

49. *And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said : Behold my mother and my brethren.*

50. *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

COMMENTARY.

46. While our Redeemer was addressing the multitudes, His blessed mother, probably desirous of withdrawing her Divine Son from the dangers that encompassed Him, and also of securing for Him some respite from His labours, stood outside, wishing to speak to Him.

"*And His brethren,*" also, that is, His cousins, who are called "*brethren,*" according to the custom among the Jews, of calling cousins, by the name of "*brethren.*" These were, most probably, the children of Mary, the daughter of Cleophas, and the wife of Alphaeus. This Mary was cousin to the Blessed Virgin. These came from Nazareth to Capharnaum to see Him.

"*Stood without,*" as they could not go in and reach Him by reason of the crowd (Luke viii. 19). It might be also, that they wished to speak to Him privately, apart from the crowd.

"*Seeking to speak to Him.*" His relatives, unable to see Him, sent a message to Him (Mark iii. 31). They (His relatives) said, "*He is become mad*" (Mark iii. 21). Whether they really thought so, or only affected to think it, in order to withdraw Him from the fury of His enemies, may be disputed. It is quite certain, the Blessed Virgin did not think so; she knew well He was of sound mind. Likely, His "*brethren,*" concealed from her, their opinions regarding Him, and brought her, by way of respect, to converse more secretly with our Lord. Their design was to force Him away with them to Nazareth.

47. "*Thy brethren.*" There is a tradition, that the Blessed Virgin was an only child. Hence, "*brethren,*" refer to the children of the cousin-german of the Blessed Virgin, viz., Mary Cleophas, the wife of Alphaeus.

"*And one said unto Him.*" St. Mark says, they sent a messenger to Him (iii. 31).

48. In asking this question, He does not mean to deny, that He had a real

mother, or to imply that He was ashamed of His mother or brethren; but, probably, to check the untimely importunity and interruption of the messenger, and also to show, as St. Ambrose intimates, that He preferred the ministry of His Father to maternal affection. He wished to convey, that He acknowledges no mother, no brother, should they in the least interfere with Him, while doing His Father's business. (See Luke ii.)

49. Our Redeemer extends the relationship to a higher degree, and takes occasion to give a preference to His spiritual relationship, which He prized more than His natural relationship. In this respect, He prized His blessed mother more than all the rest of creation; because, in a spiritual sense, she was the most perfect and the holiest of God's creatures.

50. In this, His blessed mother is pre-eminently included, as she had, in the most perfect manner, accomplished God's holy and adorable will. The words, "*brother, sister,*" &c., show, that in spiritual relationship, there is no distinction of sex; but, that all are one, as St. Paul declares (Gal. iii. 28).

CHAPTER XIII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Lord leaving His house, proceeds to the sea shore, where He speaks to the people in parables (1-2). The first is the parable of the sower and the seed (3-8), which parable He Himself explains (18-23). His disciples having asked Him *why* He spoke in parables to the people, He assigns the cause (9-15), and He also assigns His reason for speaking intelligibly to His disciples, and points out the peculiar blessedness they enjoyed, even beyond the Prophets and just of old (16-18). He then explains the parable of the sower (18-23). He next proposes the parable of the cockle and the good seed (24-31), which He explains, in compliance with the request of His disciples, when alone in the house (36-43). He next proposes the parable of the mustard seed and of the leaven hidden in the baked bread (31-33). In thus discoursing in parables, He fulfilled the ancient prophecies (34-35). He explains the parable of the cockle (36-43). He next speaks of the parables of the hidden treasure, the pearls, and the drag net, and points out the duty of the Apostles, as spiritual teachers, to explain these things hereafter to the people (44-52). We have, next, an account of our Redeemer's arrival in His native place of Nazareth; of the wonder His teaching and miracles produced among the people; their incredulity, on account of which He did not perform many miracles there.

TEXT.

THE same day Jesus going out of the house, sat by the sea side.

2. *And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went up into a boat and sat: and all the multitude stood on the shore.*

3. *And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying: Behold the sower went forth to sow.*

4. *And whilst he soweth some fell by the way side, and the birds of the air came and ate them up.*

5. *And other some fell upon stony ground where they had not much earth: and they sprung up immediately, because they had no deepness of earth.*

6. *And when the sun was up they were scorched: and because they had not root, they withered away.*

7. *And others fell among thorns: and the thorns grew up and choked them.*

8. *And others fell upon good ground: and they brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold.*

9. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

10. *And his disciples came and said to him: Why speakest thou to them in parables?*

11. *Who answered and said to them : Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven : but to them it is not given.*

12. *For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound : but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath.*

13. *Therefore do I speak to them in parables : because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

14. *And the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in them, who saith : "By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand : and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive.*

15. *For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut : lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."*

16. *But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear.*

17. *For, amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them : and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.*

18. *Hear you therefore the parable of the sower.*

19. *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, there cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart : this is he that received the seed by the way side.*

20. *And he that received the seed upon stony ground : this is he that heareth the word, and immediately receiveth it with joy.*

21. *Yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time : and when there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized.*

22. *And he that received the seed among thorns : is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke up the word, and he becometh fruitless.*

23. *But he that receiveth the seed upon good ground : this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth, and beareth fruit, and yieldeth, the one, an hundred fold, and another sixty, and another thirty.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*The same day,*" may either mean, *the same time*, about the period at which the events recorded in the preceding chapter, took place—a sense, in which the word, "*day,*" is often used in the SS. Scripture—or, taken strictly, the day, or evening of the same day. There being no reason for departing from this strict and literal signification of the word, this latter meaning is preferable.

"*Going out of the house,*" wherein He lodged at Capharnaum, and in which the message referred to (xii. 47), was conveyed to Him.

"*Sat by the sea side,*" the Sea of Galilee or Lake of Genesareth, near Capharnaum, called "*Sea,*" *par excellence*, as being a very large body of water, surrounded, as we are informed, by the most delightful scenery.

2. In consequence of the vast crowds that followed Him from the neighbouring towns and villages to hear His doctrine, our Redeemer retired to the sea coast, and entering a boat, which He used for a pulpit, He addressed the multitudes on the shore.

3. "*Many things.*" Most likely, He spoke much more than is here recorded. For, if every thing which Jesus did, was written, "*the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written*" (John xxi. 25).

"In parables." By a Scripture "parable," is meant, according to Primate Dixon ("Introduction to SS. Scriptures," vol 1, Dissert. xii. c. iii), "a continued and well arranged narrative of some possible, but fictitious event, applied to the illustration of some sacred truth." "Parable" and "Proverb" differ in this: that the former is a continued narrative; the latter is always brief. The former expresses the comparison; in the latter, when a comparison exists, it is only implied. The Greek word for "Parable," occurs only in the three first Evangelists. St. John, in every instance, terms them, not *παραβολαι* (*parables*), but *προιμια* (*proverbs*). Both words are often interchanged and used as convertible terms, and identified. The Hebrew word for both is the same, *Marshah*. Hence, the Septuagint translators of the Book of Solomon, render it, *προιμια*, *Proverbs*; and the same word is afterwards rendered by them, *παραβολαι*, *parables*. This latter they did, when there was a comparison expressed, and the *narrative* longer. "Parable" and "Proverb" are, moreover, identified in this: that both, at least, in their origin, were obscure, and hard to be understood. Again, although a proverb conveys no comparison, it is sometimes, a figurative form of expression. For example, "Desire, when it cometh, is a tree of life." They resemble each other in this respect also, that, a "proverb" is but a condensed parable; it is the essence and substance of a parable.

"Of some possible, but fictitious event." The parables of the New Testament always refer to events, that are in accordance with the laws and ordinary course of Nature; events, that often occurred, and were, probably, in many instances, suggested by what was actually occurring before the eyes of the person who uttered them. Thus, for instance, our Redeemer, in the parable of the "Sower," might be looking at some sower in an adjoining field.

"Applied to the illustration of some sacred truth." In this, it differs from a *Fable* the moral of which is always intended to illustrate some maxim of human prudence. The *Parable* is always intended to illustrate some high spiritual maxims.

The venerable and learned authority already quoted, observes: The Parable appears to bear the same relation to the Simile, that the Allegory bears to the Metaphor; and, hence, in Scripture, the Parable is generally introduced by some such form as, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto," &c., from which it would appear, that the Parable is but a prolonged Simile.

It was common with the people of the East, and well suited to the natural temperament of Eastern nations, to employ parables for the purpose of conveying and illustrating abstract moral truths. St. Jerome tells us, this was quite usual among the people of Palestine particularly. "Familiale est Syris et maxime Palestinis ad omnem Sermonem suum parabolas jungere" (St. Jerome).

Hence, our Redeemer, accommodating Himself to the prevalent usages and manners of the people, frequently employs parables to convey and illustrate His heavenly doctrines. This method of illustrating moral truths, was attended with many advantages. Besides fixing the attention on the subjects treated of, and of exciting curiosity, it served to impress more vividly on the minds and imaginations of the hearers, the abstract truths illustrated through the medium of sensible images, and of objects familiar to them; and thus served as a most powerful help to memory. It was attended with another advantage—the only one referred to here by our Redeemer—"it protected the sacred Word from the disrespect with which the ill-disposed would have received it, had it been plainly announced" (Dixon, *ibidem*). "In the explanation of Scripture parables, two things must be principally attended to—1st. That in the parables, persons are not compared with persons, nor the parts of the parable with the parts of the thing signified, but the whole parable

is compared with the *whole thing* which it illustrates. 2ndly. In the interpretation of parables, all things in the parables are not to be applied to the thing signified. . . . Some things are introduced in the parable, merely for the purpose of rendering the narrative consistent throughout; mere ornaments of the narrative" (*loco citato.*)

3. (*First Parable.*) "*Saying.*" St. Mark (iv. 3), says, He solicited their attention, saying, "*Hear ye; Behold, the sower went forth,*" &c. The evident scope of the parable, is to point out the fruit or effect produced by God's Word—by the same seed, that was scattered on the good and bad soil—according to the different dispositions, whether good or evil, and in several degrees, on the part of the hearers.

Our Redeemer Himself explains the parable, in verse 18, &c.

9. As it required great attention to understand this parable; and, moreover, no one could understand it, unless "*it was given;*" hence, our Lord, as was His wont, in treating of matters of importance, or of obscure and difficult subjects, solicits their attention to whom "*it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*"

10. "*And His disciples came and said to Him.*" From St. Mark (iv. 10), it appears, the disciples did this after our Redeemer had retired to His house, and was alone with them, having sent away the crowds. He had proposed, consecutively, some of the parables recorded here, before He was asked by His disciples to explain the meaning, "*Why speakest Thou to them in parables?*" and, then, it was He explained them. But, St. Matthew, in his narrative, interrupts the course of the parables, and after narrating that of the sower, he describes, by anticipation, the request of the disciples to have it explained. They, it would seem, proposed a twofold question; 1st. As in this verse, *why* did He speak to the people in parables? 2nd. *What* the parable meant. "*What this parable might be*" (Luke viii. 9); "*they asked Him the parable*" (Mark iv. 10). Hence, our Redeemer gives a twofold answer.

11. He answers the first question in this verse. He reserves the answer to the second, for verse 18. It is deserving of remark, that our Redeemer, in His reply, does not assign all His reasons for speaking in parables. There were several reasons of utility for this, not to speak of the peculiar accommodation of parabolic language to the lively and imaginative temperament of the Eastern peoples (see v. 3). The reason here assigned by our Redeemer, is simply in reply to the question of His disciples, "*Why speakest Thou to them in parables?*" Because, to His disciples, and all who believe in Him, "*it was GIVEN*"—which implies, that the knowledge of spiritual truths, and the capacity for understanding them, is the pure gift of God, and comes, not from the strength of nature; but, from God's holy grace—"to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;" that is, to have a full knowledge of the hidden kingdom of Christ, and faith in Him. To them were given ears to hear, and holy dispositions to profit by the instructions of our Lord, as their eager inquiries indicated (Mark iv. 10).

"But, to them it is not given," to them who have ears to hear, and hear not, who harden their hearts against the impressions of Divine grace, "*it is not given*" to know the hidden spiritual truths ("*the mysteries*") connected with "*the kingdom of heaven;*" and, therefore, these truths are not proposed to them in their plain, naked form, as they might and would, reject and spurn them. And so, these pearls are not to be cast before swine; they must be veiled under the image of parables, to save them from

disrespect and profanation. As if He said : To you I speak in plain language ; because, to you, who are humble and docile, and glowing with the desire of hearing and understanding, it has been granted, as a singular favour, by the Father of lights, to know, not alone the Evangelical truths, which all should know, and which I, therefore, always expound in the plainest language ; but also, "the mysteries," the secret and admirable dispensations of Providence regarding the progress of the Gospel, as well among Jews as among Gentiles. But to them, most of whom, either disbelieve, or are influenced by idle curiosity, or despise and calumniate My doctrines, this special favour granted to you is not given. It is rather withheld from them by My Father, having proved themselves unworthy of it by their pride, unbelief, and abuse of gifts already bestowed on them.

12. In this verse is conveyed a reason for the foregoing dispensation of giving these gifts to the Apostles, and of withholding them from the others ; and, consequently, for His speaking obscurely to the latter class, and plainly to the former (see xxv. 29).

"*That hath,*" that makes good use of the gifts he possesses, faithfully corresponds with the graces received, and employs them advantageously, according to the intentions of the original donor. "*To him (more, or a further increase of gifts), shall be given, and he shall abound*" the more. "*But he that hath not,*" who neglects to turn to profit or advantage the gifts he has ; so that, although possessing them, he might be said, *not to have them*, as he uses them not, and might as well not have them at all, which is illustrated by "*having eyes and seeing not.*" "*Even that which he hath*"—in chapter xxv. 29, it is, "*that which he SEEMETH to have ;*" and Luke (viii. 18), "*that which he THINKETH he hath*"—" *shall be taken away from him.*"

This would seem to be a proverbial form of expression, applied by our Redeemer to His present purpose, as if to convey to us, that what is said commonly to occur, is verified also in regard to the kingdom of heaven.

In this verse is conveyed, that while the knowledge of the mysteries of faith, and assent to them, come from God's grace, our own free will has a share in meriting, or not meriting, their further increase and extension. "*He that HATH,*" that is, that freely uses and employs. "*Hath not,*" freely neglects using and properly employing them.

Here, then, the adagial expression means : To you I plainly disclose the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ; because, having faith and a desire of further gifts, you faithfully correspond with God's designs, and, aided by His grace, you profitably employ the gifts already conferred on you. But to the others, "*who are without*" (Mark iv. 11), who, through their own fault, are devoid of faith, and have no desire of knowing the truth, and of profiting by the grace already bestowed, I speak in an obscure way ; for, in punishment of their voluntary abuse of My gifts, they may be classed with those "*who have not,*" who neglect employing the faculties and gifts bestowed on them. "*Hath,*" manifestly means, "*to use ;*" and "*hath not,*" to neglect using, the gifts one possesses ; because, there is question here of merited rewards and punishment ; and the reward conferred on one, and the punishment inflicted on the other, is founded on the use or neglect of the gifts they respectively possessed.

In the words, "*but he that hath not, that also which he hath, shall be taken from him.*" "*HATH NOT,*" means, *uses not.* "*That also which he HATH,*" means, *actually possesses, viz., the knowledge of Divine things, which he has or seems to have—the preaching of the Gospel—which he has hitherto enjoyed ; nay, the very natural light of reason, which he has abused, shall, in punishment of this abuse, be taken from him, so that*

he shall become blinder and blinder still, and in punishment of his ingratitude, delivered up to a reprobate sense.

13. "*Because seeing, they see not,*" &c. Because, seeing My miracles, and hearing My heavenly doctrines, they are like men who have not the faculty of seeing or hearing; they have no wish to believe or to understand. "*Therefore,*" it is, in punishment of their perversity, being unwilling to believe or receive what is clear, they deserve to be addressed in an obscure style of language, which they would not understand.

The words of this verse contain an application to the Jewish multitudes, and an illustration or elucidation, of the general proverbial truths of the preceding verse. The application, in the words, "*therefore, I speak to them in parables;*" the elucidation, in the words, "*because hearing, they hear not, seeing, they see not.*"

"*Neither do they understand,*" is a fuller explanation of "*seeing and hearing,*" which clearly mean, intellectual seeing and hearing.

In Mark (iv. 12), Luke (viii. 10), the words are, "*THAT seeing, they may see and not perceive,*" &c. This reading is easily explained and reconciled with the reading of St. Matthew here. It is likely, our Redeemer used and meant both forms of expression, so as to intimate that the blindness of this people was partly owing to their own perversity; partly, to the just judgment of God. The word, "*that,*" expresses, not the *end* or *final cause*; but, the *consequence* or *result* of their voluntarily closing their eyes. The *consequence* of their failing and neglecting to profit by God's grace is, that they are *permitted to persevere* in the state of blindness and obduracy, in which, we are informed here by St. Matthew, they had been already. In Mark and Luke, is shown *how* the judgment of taking away is fearfully exercised in the spiritual reprobation of the Jews, who, by Divine permission, are left and abandoned in their blindness and hardness of heart, in punishment of their pride and contempt of grace.

In interpreting this and similar passages, we must utterly abhor the blasphemy of some heretics, who make God the author of sin. In cases of obduracy and impenitence, He, by a just judgment, withdraws His lights and graces, from which the sinner's obduracy follows as infallibly, as if God had positively blinded and hardened him.

14. "*The prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled in them.*" The words addressed by Isaias to the men of his own day, have their principal fulfilment in the men of our Redeemer's time—who were the same people with the Jews who lived in the days of Isaias—and in all others, who at any future period may abuse or neglect the grace of God.

"*By hearing, you shall hear,*" &c. (Isaias vi. 9, &c.) The reading is different in Isaias. According to St. Jerome's version it is: "*Go, and thou shalt say to this people: Hearing, hear and understand not; and see the vision, and know it not. Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy,*" &c. In this imperative form, found in the original Hebrew, and literally rendered by St. Jerome, the Prophet is commanded to predict the blindness and obduracy of the Jewish people. St. Matthew here follows the Septuagint version, which, for the imperative, employs a future indicative—a thing by no means unusual with the Hebrews—and explains the meaning of the original words of the Prophet. Hence, "*by hearing, you shall hear,*" the future indicative, properly expresses the meaning of the imperative words, "*hearing, hear,*" &c., as a prophecy of the blindness and obduracy which would be permitted, by a just judgment of God, to befall the Jewish people, who obstinately refuse to admit our

Redeemer's Divinity, and the truth of His doctrine, in presence of the many splendid miracles He had performed in their midst.

15. "*For, the heart of this people is grown gross,*" &c., is a clearer expression, according to the Septuagint version, followed by St. Matthew, of the form employed by the Prophet, "*blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy;*" because, the Prophet could not, from himself, blind their hearts any more than he could enlighten them. Hence, he is only told, "*Go and say to this people,*" &c., that is, to predict that this melancholy result of spiritual blindness was to take place, which the form used by St. Matthew clearly expresses. Such is the force of a command or imprecation addressed by God to a prophet, that it is generally equivalent to a prediction of the event, or of the evil which God, in His anger, permits. Thus we have, "*quod facis, fac citius,*" "*Solvite templum hoc,*" &c. The words of this verse, metaphorically refer to the faculties of the soul, viz., the intellect, and the will.

"*And with their ears,*" &c., is expressed in the imperative, in the original Hebrew.

"*And their eyes they have shut,*" also expressed imperatively by the Prophet. They merely convey a prophecy of what was to take place.

The Greek word for, "*have shut*" (εκαμυσαν), means, to *close the eyelids*. Hence, according to the reading adopted by St. Matthew, it is the Jews themselves that, by a voluntary act, have closed their eyes, and shut their ears, against the impressions of Divine grace.

"*Lest at any time, they should see with their eyes,*" &c. Shows their great perversity in refusing the lights and graces of God. They affected ignorance, lest they should give up sin—"noluit intelligere ut bene ageret" (Psa. xxxv. 4). The words, "*lest at any time*" (μηποτε), signifies, in the Hebrew, *lest, perhaps*, as they are translated by St. Luke (Acts xxviii. 27).

"*And I should heal them.*" The Hebrew, is in the *third person*, "*and they should be healed;*" or, *healing be granted them*—"sanatio sit eis."

16. He pronounces His Apostles happy—in contrast with the wretched men of Capharnaum, the Scribes and Pharisees, cursed with spiritual blindness—because, they not only saw our Redeemer, and His wonderful works, with the eyes of the body, and heard His sacred preaching, as did the incredulous multitude; but, they saw them with the eyes of their mind, by understanding Him. They also believed in His miracles, and the preaching regarding His Divinity, which they heard.

17. He extols the special privileges and happiness enjoyed by His Apostles, by comparing their lot, not only with that of the incredulous Jews; but, with that of the just of old. They were blessed beyond the Jews of their own day; because, they saw, *also spiritually*, what the others only saw *corporally*; and beyond the just of old, who only saw by faith, at a distant futurity, what they had the happiness of seeing in person. The Apostles are blessed beyond the Jews, on account of *spiritual vision*; beyond the Patriarchs, &c., on account of *corporal vision*. These latter could only salute from afar, the things that were present to the Apostles.

St. Luke (x. 24) has, "*Many prophets and kings have desired,*" &c.; "*Abraham rejoiced that he might see His day*" (John viii. 56); Jacob "*looked for His salvation*" (Gen. xlix. 18). The saints of old yearned for it, and pierced the heavens with their cries—"rorate celi desuper et nubes pluant justum." (Isa. xlv. 8). In this verse, our Redeemer shows the incomparable privilege bestowed on the Apostles; inasmuch, as

on them, who were distinguished, neither for exalted rank, nor wisdom, nor justice, were conferred blessings denied to men high in favour with God, remarkable for justice, and clothed with the royal dignity, although anxiously longing to see the Son of God in the flesh.

The words of this verse are by no means opposed to the words, "*Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed;*" because, in these latter words, the comparison is between those who believe without seeing, and those who, measuring faith by their own vision, believe only the things which they see. The Apostles both saw and believed. Abraham was blessed in believing what he saw not, save at a distant futurity. But the Apostles were still more blessed; because, they clearly saw with the eyes of the body, what he saw only obscurely, at a distance, with the eyes of the mind (Heb. xi. 13; 1 Peter i. 10-12).

18. Our Redeemer now answers the second question proposed regarding the meaning of the parable, and points out four different descriptions of hearers. 1. Those hardened in sin. 2. Those who were light-minded, and inconstant in good. 3. Those engrossed with the embarrassments and pleasures of life. 4. Those well disposed to receive the Word. His disciples asked our Lord, "*the parable*" (Mark iv. 10), to whom He replied: "*Are you ignorant of this parable? and how shall you know all parables?*" (Mark iv. 13); that is to say, how shall you be able to understand other and more difficult parables, which it shall be your duty to explain to the people?

19. "*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom*" of heaven, or of the Gospel, "*and understandeth it not,*" that is, takes no pains to treasure it up, and by diligent meditation, to bury it deep in his heart, "*the wicked one*" (ὁ πονηρός) he, who by nature is "*wicked*"—St. Mark calls him, "*Satan;*" St. Luke (viii. 12)—"*the devil*"—"cometh and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart;" sinners of this description, having been addicted to long and inveterate habits of sin, have their hearts hardened against the impressions of Divine grace. When such sinners hear the Word of God, the devil, this wicked spirit, who dwells in the air, like a foul bird of prey, descends, and waging his fiendish war, by either drawing the attention of this wretched sinner to the objects of former indulgence, and distracting him by presenting a multitude of dissipating thoughts, leaves him no time for reflection on his miserable state; and thus, the fruit which meditation on God's holy Word might produce, is lost. "*This is he that received the seed,*" &c., that is, such a person is aptly represented by "*the seed*" (which fell) "*by the way side,*" along the hard, beaten path. The seed, which was scattered, "*is the Word of God*" (Luke viii. 11). The soil, or earth on which it fell, is the heart of man. This seed which is, in itself, the same, produces different effects, according to the difference of soil or earth; in other words, according to the difference of dispositions in the hearers. The manifest scope of the parable is to point out that our Lord Himself, is the sower or preacher of His heavenly Word, and that the same Word produces different fruits, according to the dispositions of those who receive it. There are several reasons, or points of analogy, between the Word of God and the seed which is scattered on the earth; and hence the parable is, so far, appropriate. The reading of this verse runs literally thus: "*On every one hearing the Word of the kingdom and not understanding it, there cometh,*" &c., παντος ακουοντος του λογου βασιλειας, &c.

"*This is he that receiveth the seed,*" &c. Literally it is, "*this is he that is sown by the way side.*" The meaning is well expressed in our version, because

"sown" (σπαρείς), means, to *receive seed*, just as we commonly say of a field, *it is sown*, or received seed. The meaning is, the seed sown by the road side, and elsewhere, suggests and represents to the mind, such and such hearers of the Word. For, it is not the seed precisely that represents the hearers, but the earth on which the seed, or "*Word of God*," falls. This man is represented by the way side or beaten path that received the seed.

20, 21. "*He that receiveth the seed on stony ground*," literally, He that *is sown* in stony ground (σπαρείς), *seminatus* (see preceding verse), represented by the stony ground on which the seed was cast. "*This is he that heareth the Word, and immediately*," &c. He is delighted with the Word of God, its beauty, its utility, rendering us just here, and happy hereafter. He tastes, to a certain extent, the joy described by the Psalmist, "*justitiæ Domini rectæ latificantes corda*," &c. (Psalm xviii. 9.) This class of men make resolutions without end, and perform acts of fervent devotion; but, they want firm constancy of resolution and perseverance. They are not "*firmly rooted and founded in charity*" (Ephes. iii. 17). But, "*it is only for a time*," the Word takes root, or, as Luke has it (viii. 13), "*they believe for awhile*," just as long as every thing prospers with them, and the shock of tribulation does not reach them; but the moment "*tribulation*" from within, or from their own household, or "*persecution*" from public authority, "*because of the Word*," that is, in consequence of their having embraced the faith, assails them; the moment their temporal prospects and their earthly enjoyments are affected by their religious professions, and that the cross, which in some shape or other, must be borne by God's elect, presents itself, then, "*he is presently scandalized*." This "*tribulation and persecution*," the dread of losing his position, his wealth, his worldly enjoyment, is become for him an occasion of sin, is become a "*scandal*," or "*stumbling block*," in his way; he deserts the faith, and the course of life which the Word he received pointed out to him. St. Luke (viii. 13), expresses it thus: "*and in time of temptation they fall away*."

22. He who is represented by the land that received the seed among thorns, is he that not only heard the Word; but, unlike the first class of hearers, understood it; and, like the second class, represented by the stony ground (v. 20), gladly embraced the Word, and was delighted with it. But, as the sight of the cross, tribulation and persecution, turned the second class aside; so, in this third class of hearers, the fruit of the Word, after giving hopes of an abundant return, was destroyed, and prevented from reaching maturity, by the "*care of this world*;" that is, by excessive anxiety, arising from undue attention to the things of this earth; and by "*the deceitfulness of riches*." "*Riches*" are deceitful; because, instead of conferring the happiness which they seem to promise, they are only the fruitful source of chagrin, bitterness, and sorrow. "*They that will become rich, fall into temptations . . . and many unprofitable and hurtful desires*," &c. (1 Tim. vi. 9, &c.)

In St. Mark (iv. 19), there are three causes assigned in connexion with "*the thorns*," for choking up the Word of God—"cares of the world, deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts after other things." So, also, in St. Luke (viii. 14)—"*cares, and riches, and pleasures of life*." To the two causes assigned in this verse by St. Matthew, they add: St. Mark, "*the lusts after other things*;" St. Luke, "*the pleasures of life*." Under these are comprehended, all carnal pleasures and worldly enjoyments prevailing in the world. The same is expressed by St. John, who traces all sin to "*the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*" (1 John ii. 16).

St. Luke has, "*and going their way, are choked*," &c., that is, following after

riches, &c., they are choked by them, or, "*going their way*," might mean, being impelled and driven on by riches, &c.

23. It is remarked, that as there is a threefold class of hearers, who receive the Word of God without fruit; so, there is also a threefold class who derive fruit in different degrees from it, according to the difference of dispositions with which they receive it. St. Luke makes no difference of degree. He only says of the good class, "*that in a good, and very good heart, hearing the Word, they keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience*;" *εν ὑπομονῇ*, in *patience*, means, the patient expectation of reaping fruit in due time. Similar is the phrase, "*in patientia vestra, possidebitis animas vestras*," that is, by their patient endurance of evil, long-suffering, &c.

St. Luke distinguishes this deserving class very pointedly from the three preceding classes. Unlike the first, out of whose hearts the devil takes the word, this class "*keep it*." Unlike the second, who receive it on a rock; this class receive it "*in a good, and very good heart*." Unlike the third, who, receiving it "*in thorns*," "*yield no fruit*;" this class "*bring forth fruit in patience*" (viii. 15).

"*Yieldeth one, an hundred fold; and another, sixty*," &c. This difference of yield corresponds with the perfection, greater or less, of those who receive the Word; for, the fruit shall be proportioned to the dispositions of the hearers, and also to the perfection of the state they may have embraced. Hence, St. Jerome, here and Epistle to Ageruchia; St. Athanasius (Epist. ad Anman), assign the hundredth fruit to virgins; the sixtieth, to continent widows; the thirtieth, to chaste nuptials. St. Augustine assigns the hundredth to martyrs; sixtieth, to virgins; and thirtieth, to the married. By "*fruit*," some understand *good works*, which remain, and are persevered in till the time of harvest—unlike the works of those who fall off, on account of persecution, or, owing to the *thorns* of care and worldly anxiety. Others understand by it, the fruit of *merit*, to be reaped in the life to come. Likely, it means both.

TEXT.

24. *Another parable he proposed to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field.*

25. *But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way.*

26. *And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle.*

27. *And the servants of the goodman of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle?*

28. *And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?*

29. *And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.*

30. *Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.*

31. *Another parable he proposed unto them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.*

32. *Which is the least indeed of all seeds, but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof.*

33. *Another parable he spoke to them : The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.*

34. *All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes : and without parables he did not speak to them.*

35. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying : " I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.*

36. *Then having sent away the multitudes, he came into the house, and his disciples came to him, saying : Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field.*

COMMENTARY.

24. (*Second Parable.*) In the foregoing parable, our Lord conveys, that the Gospel seed does not always produce fruit in the hearers ; that three-fourths of the seed produced no fruit at all, on account of the soil on which it fell. Only a fourth part, that fell on good soil, was productive. He now proposes another parable, closely connected with the subject of the foregoing. In this parable of "*the cockle*" He wishes to inform us, that even on the good soil—God's Church—not all are good or virtuous. The good are sometimes mixed with hypocrites and wicked men ; that the good seed which produced such abundant fruit, referred to, in the preceding verse, is not always free from weeds, which are sometimes mixed up with it.

"*The kingdom of heaven,*" viz., the Church of Christ, "*is likened to a man that sowed good seed,*" &c. *The kingdom of heaven* is not precisely like the man who sows seed. The meaning of this and similar forms of expression is : *Something happens* in regard to *the kingdom of heaven*, similar to what follows, &c. ; and in reference to the present example, this is clearly expressed by St. Mark (iv. 26), "*So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth.*" In the application of parables to the principal subject, which they are intended to illustrate, it is neither necessary, nor, sometimes, expedient, to apply all the parts of the parable to the parts of the subject of illustration ; but, only the whole subject, or, rather, the principal parts, of the parable, to the whole subject to be illustrated ; since, there are several parts of the parable that have no signification or force whatever in the mind of the speaker, and are introduced for *ornament's sake*, and for the purpose of rendering the narrative in the parable complete, consistent, and true to nature throughout, in regard to the literal and original texture of the parable itself. The parts of the parable to be applied can be easily seen from the scope of those who employ it, and from the context. Thus, we see that in the explanation and application of this parable of the cockle, by our Blessed Lord (v. 37), at the earnest prayer of His Apostles, He says nothing whatever of the servants, who wished to pluck up the cockle, and gather it up, nor of the sleep of the husbandman, during which the enemy sowed the cockle, &c. ; because, probably, these parts had nothing to do with the main object He had in view in introducing the parable.

25. "*But while men were asleep,*" simply means, during the darkness of the night, when the world is at rest. Others understand it, of the indolent neglect of the pastors of the Church. "*His enemy came.*" The sower of the good seed was the first to sow the seed in his field, and this in the light of day ; the enemy came furtively in the night, to sow cockle over it, where the good seed had been previously sown.

26. When the good seed was on the point of maturity, the cockle appeared.

27. Who "*the servants*" are, our Redeemer does not say, in His exposition of the

parable; probably, because this did not fall within the general scope of the parable, but was introduced merely to fill up the parabolical narrative.

By "servants," some understand, the angels (St. Jerome). Others, with St. Augustine, understand by them, good men, zealous in the cause of justice.

28. "Wilt thou?" &c., shows the zeal of the servants of God, who would have no wicked men in the world, nor cockle in the field of the Lord.

29. Our Lord restrains their zeal, lest, in the indiscriminate destruction of the wicked, the good also should suffer. From the words of this verse, it by no means follows, that the disseminators of false doctrines, or of wicked principles, should be permitted, whenever there is power to restrain them, to circulate their false and wicked principles, without hindrance or punishment. All that follows from this passage is, that no persons are warranted, of *their own private* authority, to punish such men, any more than they are permitted to punish evil-doers, in other respects, of their own authority. But those vested with public authority are not prohibited, for the general good, to visit transgressors, whether against faith or morals, with due punishment. The laws of all civilized and Christian states punish gross violations of the moral law. Moreover, we are not to apply to the subject all the parts of a parable. But, even supposing this part were applied, all that would follow is, that, in general, the wicked of all classes, are to be tolerated and permitted to live among the good. Besides, so far as the reason assigned here, by the father of the family, is concerned, the toleration towards them holds only when there is any *doubt* about them, and they are not manifestly guilty, and distinguishable from the good; but whenever their guilt is so manifest, that such people have no defenders, and there can be no fear of evil consequences, then, so far as the reason assigned here is concerned, there is nothing against extirpating and punishing the incorrigible and perverse enemies of religion and society; and this particularly holds when the punishment of miscreants, who scatter broadcast principles subversive of all order, of civil society, as well as of religion, is necessary for the preservation of the good seed.

30. This verse is fully explained by our Lord Himself. (vv. 39, 40, &c.) He explains the parable of the cockle (vv. 37-43).

37. The sower is our Redeemer Himself, who, while on earth, preached the Word, and now employs the ministry of His servants for the same end.

38. "The field is the world," by which some understand, the Church, extended all over the earth; but, as "the children of the wicked one," most probably include heretics, who are not in the Church, hence, it may be better to understand the word in its strict literal signification, unless it might be said in reply, that it only includes *private* heretics who are not distinguishable from the true believers.

"The good seed, the children of the kingdom," viz., those who are destined for eternal life—those who observe the law of faith and morals. "The cockle, the children of the wicked one"—the devil, those who do his works, wicked works whether against faith or morals. Some understand, by "the children of the kingdom," all believers, whether elect or not;—thus it is said of "the children of the kingdom" elsewhere, that they shall be cast "into outer darkness"—and, by "the children of the wicked one," heretics.

40. As the cockle is gathered up, so the wicked shall be "bound in bundles"—the

heretics with heretics, the unjust with the unjust, the unclean with the unclean, &c., and cast into hell fire.

41. "*All scandals*," i.e., scandalous sinners, and those who commit every other species of iniquity. The application of the parable is briefly this: The Son of man has, both by Himself and His servants, placed in this world, as in His field, men pre-ordained for eternal life. But, the devil—the sworn enemy of the human race—has sown in their midst, and shall continue to do so, wicked men, placing them in the midst of the just, who, although unworthy of the society of the just, are still to be tolerated, until God, at the end of the world, shall cause the final separation, devoting the one class to eternal misery, rewarding the other with eternal glory.

42. "*Weeping and gnashing of teeth*," is explained by some, of the extremes of heat and cold, as if this "*gnashing of teeth*" were caused by sudden transitions from one extreme to the other. The words are commonly understood to refer to hell. The words may be regarded as expressive of extreme torture of any kind. "*Gnashing of teeth*," expressive of rage. Thus (Acts vii. 54), the rage of the Jews is expressed in the words, "*they gnashed with their teeth at Him*."

43. The incomparable happiness and glory of the Elect is clearly signified by the brightness of the sun. This glory, however, shall vary with the diversity of merits (1 Cor. xv. 39-41). Our Redeemer had, probably, in view the words of the Prophet Daniel (xii. 3), "*they that instruct many unto justice, shall shine as stars*," &c.

"*He that hath ears*," &c. Our Redeemer employs this form of words to convey, that the subject treated of intimately concerns His hearers.

31. (*Third Parable*.) This is the place to explain, in order, the words of St. Mark (iv. 26), where the third parable uttered by our Redeemer, is recorded.

"*So is the kingdom of heaven*," that is, something happens in regard to "*the kingdom of heaven*;" or, to the preaching of the Gospel, "*as if a man should cast seed into the earth*" (Mark iv. 26), "*and should sleep and rise, night and day*," devoting himself to other matters, whether appertaining to rest or labour, he would sleep at night, and rise to his usual avocations in the day; and the seed would grow up, whilst the sower had no thought or concern about its growth.

"*Sleep and rise*," are understood by some, of the "*seed*," which would "*sleep*," by being committed to the earth, and afterwards "*rise*," that is, grow up day and night, whilst the sower never thinks of it. However, the words, more probably, refer to the husbandman, as explained above, the word, "*sleep*," having reference to "*night*," and "*rise*" to the "*day*." "*For the earth itself*" (Mark iv. 28), without any further culture from the husbandman, but not exclusive of other concurring causes, e.g., sun, rain, and God Himself, "*bringeth forth fruit*," &c.

"*And when the fruit is brought forth*" (Mark iv. 29). The Greek for, "*is brought forth*" (*παράδοι*), means, "*brings forth*," in which case, "*fruit*" may be understood of the grain, itself the fruit of a former sowing; or, if the word, "*fruit*," be understood of the present grain springing forth from the seed sown, then, "*brings forth*," will have the meaning given in our version, "*is brought forth*;" or, "*brings forth*," manifests and shows itself.

Our Blessed Redeemer does not Himself explain this and the following parables, as He had been graciously pleased to do in regard to the two preceding ones. However, the parable manifestly points out to us, that in the work of preaching the Gospel,

we should not be cast down by any apparent want of success in our labours. The labour is ours, but the increase must come from God; and, like the natural fruits of the earth, it is only in time we can expect the spiritual fruit, for which, like the husbandman, we must patiently wait, until God shall be pleased to bestow the fertile influences of "*the early and the latter rain*" (James v. 7). As the seed committed to the earth imperceptibly springs up, even when the husbandman is not thinking of it; so, does the Word of God, committed to a heart disposed for its reception, imperceptibly shoot forth, whilst the preacher has no thought whatever regarding it. Again, as the seed successively produces the ear, the stalk, &c.; so does the Word of God gradually bring about the full fruit of salvation, in the hearer disposed to profit by it. Holy desires, disrelish for the vanities of the world, feelings of compunction, faith in God, and hope in His promises, may be called the *stalk*. Good works, victory of the soul over her passions, and over the temptations of the devil, *the ear*; *perseverance* in grace and charity, *the full corn in ear*; and, finally, a happy death, and the enjoyment of bliss, are the *putting in of the sickle, and the final gathering in of the harvest* (Mauduit and Rutter).

31. (*Fourth Parable.*) This is the fourth parable, which in St. Mark (iv. 30), is thus introduced: "*To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? or to what parable shall we compare it?*"

The spread of the Church, and the Gospel doctrine—the meaning of, "*kingdom of heaven*"—is, "*like to a grain of mustard seed,*" &c.

32. "*Which is indeed the least of all seeds.*" There are some smaller seeds. The words mean, it is *one of the* least of all seeds. It is quite a common form of expression, when speaking of something small, to speak of it in the superlative, and to say of it, it is *the least*, or, a *very small*, thing. "*But when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs.*" In hot countries, the mustard seed grows into a small tree, exceeding in height the human stature (Lucas Brugensis), "*so that the birds of the air come and dwell,*" that is, perch, "*in the branches thereof.*" The Greek word, *κατασκηνόω*, would convey the idea, of *nestling*, or fixing their abode. But the word, "*dwell,*" may mean, to rest, or perch, on the branches.

The parable of the mustard seed, exhibits the great virtue and active efficacy of the Gospel doctrine. It was a proverbial kind of saying among the Jews, when they spoke of anything very small, to compare it to a mustard seed. The parable of the mustard seed is not explained by our Divine Redeemer. We are left to explain it ourselves. The holy Fathers understand it, of the spread of the faith and of the Gospel. It exhibits to us also the great virtue and active efficacy of the Gospel doctrine. This doctrine of the Gospel, whereby the Church was founded, and gathered together, was, from a human point of view, the meanest and most contemptible of all other doctrines, whether we regard the subjects it propounded—the mysterious doctrines of original sin, and the other mysteries impervious to human reason—its maxims so opposed to flesh and blood; or, its original Founder, a crucified Man, the preaching of whose Divinity scandalized the Jews, and made the Gentiles cry, "*folly*;" or, the instruments employed in its propagation—a few illiterate, ignorant fishermen, without knowledge, station, or influence, who were to combat the wisdom of the philosopher, and the eloquence of the rhetorician; and yet, notwithstanding these obstacles, humanly speaking, insuperable, this small grain of mustard seed, after being some time buried in the earth, extended itself far and wide, encircling the habitable globe, covering, with its ample shade, the great ones of the

world; those elevated above their fellows in learning, such as the philosophers; in power and station, such as kings and princes. Or, "*birds*," may rather signify those elevated souls, whose aspirations tended aloft towards the happiness of heaven. This Gospel doctrine, after extending itself to the entire earth, produced numberless saints, out of all conditions of life, who exhibited the most striking examples of heroic virtue; so that the Church, propagated by this doctrine, far exceeds, in point of extent, permanency, and splendour, every sect existing in this world (Mauduit).

This parable represents the increase of the Church, by means of the Gospel doctrine. For, the Church—"the kingdom of heaven"—like to a grain of mustard, the least of seeds, which grows into a tree, was first very small when planted by Christ on earth; but, glowing with charity, it became a great tree, like that described by Daniel (iv. 7).

33. (*Fifth Parable.*) This parable has the same scope and object as the preceding. It shows the great and active efficacy of the Gospel doctrine, and the wonderful spread of the Church, from very small beginnings. The word, "*leaven*," is often taken in a bad sense in Scripture. (Mark viii.; Gal. v.; 1 Cor. v.) On account of its different properties of infecting the thing with which it is mixed up, it is susceptible of a good or bad signification. Hence, it is taken sometimes, as here, in a good signification.

"Which a woman took and hid." It was the women that baked bread among the Jews (Lev. xxvi. 26.)

"In three measures"—"*in tribus satis*." What quantity each of these measures in question contained, we cannot precisely know, as we have no corresponding measures. It was the *seah* of the Jews, the third part of an *epha*, containing, probably, about ten pints, the ordinary quantity baked at a time (Gen. xviii. 6).

The scope of the parable is to convey, that as the leaven, however small in quantity, affects the entire mass of the flour with which it is mixed, and fermenting the dough by its activity, makes it rise and become more savoury, so as to become wholesome nutriment for man; so, in like manner, the Gospel doctrine, however humble in its accompaniments, preached by a few fishermen, and embraced at first by only the lowly and the humble, shall, by its occult power, change and ferment the entire world, or whole human race, and, imbuing them with its own nature, and filling them with the love of God, shall make them fit subjects for heaven. As the preceding parable denoted the *external* and visible effects of the Gospel on the hearts of men; so does this, most probably, denote its *internal* and *invisible* effects, its fermentation and the active love of God, which it produces in the heart of man.

By the "*woman*," referred to here, St. Jerome understands, the Church gathered from all nations. St. Augustine (Lib. 1, quest. Evan.), the power and wisdom of God.

34. "*Spoke in parables*," to which Mark adds (iv. 33), "*according as they were able to hear*," which, by some, is understood to mean, according as they were *worthy* of instruction. For, as the Scribes and Pharisees listened solely with the view of catching Him in His words; He, therefore, on account of their unworthiness, spoke to them in an obscure way; otherwise, they would have derived detriment, rather than profit, from His words, and would have treated them disrespectfully. This is in accordance with verse 12.

Others give the words a favourable interpretation. He accommodates Himself to the capacity of the simple people, by proposing, under the images of things with

which they were conversant in their daily course of life, His abstruse doctrines, which they could not otherwise comprehend; and this form of conveying ideas in parables would stimulate the people to seek, from competent persons, the meaning of what they heard. According to this interpretation, another reason is assigned for the use of parables, quite different from that assigned verse 12.

"*And without parables He did not speak to them,*" may mean, that, generally speaking, parabolic language was mixed up with all the addresses of our Redeemer to the multitude; or the words may mean, that, *on that occasion, at that time*, He did not speak to them except in parables. For, on many other occasions, He discoursed to them in the simplest literal language. St. Mark says, "*but apart He explained all things to His disciples,*" as if to show, that all things our Redeemer then spoke to the multitude were in parables, requiring explanation, which was given to the disciples. In truth, parabolic language was not the mode of instruction ordinarily employed by our Redeemer.

35. The result of our Redeemer's addressing the people in parables was: that He fulfilled, and verified what was spoken by the Prophet mystically in his sacred Person. The Prophet, while primarily referring to the events recorded in the Psalm, represented Christ, and spoke, in His Person, in a mystical and still more recondite sense—the sense principally intended by the Holy Ghost—of the great blessings bestowed on the human race by the Gospel and the great work of Redemption.

"*I will open my mouth,*" a Hebrew form, for, "*I will speak,*" denoting, at the same time, some obscure and important subject, "*in parables.*" "*I will utter things hidden from the foundation,*" &c. The Septuagint of Psalm lxxvii, to which reference is made, runs thus: "*I shall utter PROBLEMS from the beginning.*" The Hebrew has, "*I shall utter enigmata (chidoth) from of old.*" The words, *problems* and *enigmata*, which the Vulgate renders "*propositiones,*" have their meaning well conveyed in our version. "*things hidden;*" for, both *problems* and *enigmata*, and *parables*, agree in this: that they contain and suggest some obscure and latent meaning besides what the words literally express; and, then, "*from the beginning,*" is well expressed in the words, "*from the foundation of the world.*" These mysteries of grace and glory, revealed by Christ to His Church, were known to but few from creation. This is well expressed by the Apostle (Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 1).

The 77th Psalm, whoever was its author, whether spoken, in the first instance, in the person of David himself, or in that of Asaph, in its primary and literal sense, commemorated the benefits of God bestowed on the Hebrew people, "*from the beginning,*" from the first time He set them apart as His chosen inheritance, and from their egress out of Egypt—which is specially mentioned in this Psalm (vv. 12, 13)—to the time of David himself. This was done with the view of inspiring them with feelings of love and gratitude to God. But, in their mystical and more recondite sense—the sense principally intended by the Holy Ghost—the Psalm referred to the great benefits conferred by our Blessed Lord—of whom the Prophet exhibited a type—in the New Law, and to the chief features of His providential dealings with the human race. Indeed, it may be said, that, as "*all things happened*"—that ancient people—"in figure" (1 Cor. x. 6), the events recorded in Psalm lxxvii. and the blessings there commemorated, from their egress out of Egypt, to the days of David, were so many types of the blessings conferred on the spiritual Israel of the New Law; and in recording these, the Prophet or Psalmist announced *parables*, in the general acceptance of the term.

36. He returned to His house at Capharnaum, which He left that day for the purpose of proceeding to the sea side. "*The parable of the cockle in the field*," was the most abstruse, and contained the heaviest menaces. Hence, this is mentioned in particular.

TEXT.

37. *Who made answer and said to them: He that soweth the good seed, is the Son of man.*

38. *And the field, is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle, are the children of the wicked one.*

39. *And the enemy that sowed them, is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the Angels.*

40. *Even as cockle therefore is gathered up, and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world.*

41. *The son of man shall send his Angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity.*

42. *And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

43. *Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

44. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

45. *Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking goodly pearls.*

46. *Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

47. *Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kind of fishes.*

48. *Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth.*

49. *So shall it be at the end of the world. The Angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just.*

50. *And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

51. *Have ye understood all these things? They say to him: Yes.*

52. *He said unto them: Therefore every Scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.*

COMMENTARY.

37-43 This passage has been already explained after verse 30 (which see).

44. "*The kingdom of heaven*," or doctrine of the Gospel, "*is like unto a treasure hidden in a field*," like unto such valuable effects as men bury in the bowels of the earth in troubled times, for greater security. "*He goeth*," that is, cautiously leaves it hidden, as he found it, or hides and conceals the fact of his having found it, "*and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field*."

As the preceding parables point out the force and efficacy of the Gospel doctrine, this parable of "*the treasure*," and the following, of "*the pearls*," show the priceless value of the same doctrine. In both parables, we are reminded of the great sacrifices we are called upon to make, if necessary, to secure the incomparable advantage of being sharers in the blessing of the Gospel, compared with which all

the goods and acquisitions of this transitory world are but dross and ordure (Phil. iii. 7-8). "*He hideth*," in reference to the Gospel privileges, signifies, that the man in question employs every possible means to guard against the loss of this priceless blessing. "*And buys that field*." By the Jewish law, a treasure belonged by right to the actual proprietor of the soil. To this, these words are allusive.

45, 46. (*Seventh Parable*.) Unlike the preceding parable, wherem, a man is supposed, without any exertions of his own, to have unexpectedly fallen in with a treasure, which God in His goodness made known to him, in this parable of the pearls, are insinuated the difficulties, the dangers and the perils which the merchant had to encounter in order to find the Gospel truth. If necessary, everything is to be sacrificed for it. "*He sold all that he had and bought it*." *Qui non renunciaverit omnibus quæ possidet non potest esse meus discipulus.*" We frequently find the truths of God compared to the most valuable of human acquisitions, viz., *pearls and precious stones*, "*desiderabilia super aurum et lapidem pretiosum*." "*Dilexi mandata tua super aurum et topazion*," &c.

47. (*Eighth Parable*.) "*The kingdom of heaven*," the Gospel doctrine, or, probably, the Church militant here below, "*is like to a net (a drag net) cast into the sea*." The Church is cast into this troubled, boisterous, stormy world, in which men are daily exposed and shipwrecked.

"*And gathering together of all kinds of fishes*." In the Church are found every description of persons, whether bond or free, rich or poor, from every quarter of the globe—saints and sinners—not that any are saints before entering the Church, as the fishes are good before caught in the net. The Parable is not, in this respect, to be urged *ad virum*; it only is meant, that *in the net*, after they have entered it, are found good and bad, saints and sinners.

48. "*When filled*." When at the end of the world, "*the fulness of the Gentiles shall have entered*." This parable exhibits the capacity and amplitude—the Catholicity of the Church—as *the net*, the whole Church, takes in the entire world. The parable was introduced for the twofold purpose of removing any grounds of surprise at seeing sinners and wicked men in the Church; as even in the best constituted kingdoms we find thieves, murderers, &c.; and of cautioning us against feeling too secure, because we are members of the Church, which includes sinners as well as saints, reprobates as well as elect.

NOTE.—Of the preceding parables, some are said to be spoken before the crowd (v. 36). Hence, it is inferred by certain commentators, that the others were not; and that they were spoken privately before the disciples. By other commentators, it is supposed that all were spoken in immediate succession and at the same time. There is no satisfactory evidence for supposing, that some were spoken *privately*, and some *publicly* before the multitudes.

51. Our Redeemer proposes this question, in order that the answer He was sure to receive would furnish a fitting opportunity of imparting the following points of instruction.

52. "*Therefore*," as you understand the things I have spoken, I wish you to bury them up in your hearts and intellects, so that as learned teachers, you may give them utterance in due time, and not keep them within yourselves. I wish, then, to inform

you, that “*every Scribe*,” that is, teacher versed in the law, “*instructed in the kingdom of heaven*,” or, as the Greek has it, “*INTO THE kingdom of heaven*,” instructed for teaching and preaching the mysteries and truths relating to the kingdom of heaven. He uses the word “*scribe*,” when speaking of an Evangelical teacher, in accordance with the language of the Jews. “*Is like to a householder*,” a provident householder, who produces from his stores all kinds of food and viands, new and old, to suit and satisfy the palate and appetite of his several guests.

The preacher of the Gospel must, then, be prepared to employ examples of all sorts, taken both from the Old Testament and the New; and bring to bear varied knowledge, derived from all legitimate sources, cultivated and perfected by daily meditation and spiritual exercises, in instructing the people. He is sure to make an ever-lasting impression, if he elucidate and confirm his teaching, and make abstract truths almost tangible by examples derived from the New Testament, and prefigured by the Old, as also by the judicious selections of examples drawn from the lives of the saints. There is hardly any point so important for preachers, as the judicious use of appropriate examples. Our Redeemer wishes to stimulate His Apostles to follow the example of preaching which He Himself had set them.

TEXT.

53. *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he passed from thence.*

54. *And coming into his own country, he taught them in their synagogues, so that they wondered and said: How came this man by this wisdom and miracles?*

55. *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude:*

56. *And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence therefore hath he all these things?*

57. *And they were scandalized in his regard. But Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*

58. *And He wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief.*

COMMENTARY.

53. “*From thence*,” that is, from His house at Capharnaum, where He resided and delivered the preceding explanations to His disciples.

54. “*And coming into His own country.*” St. Luke (iv. 16) says, it was Nazareth, where He was brought up, and, moreover, it was only at Nazareth the people knew His former occupation, habits of life, family and relatives (v. 55). The order of narrative followed by St. Matthew is preferred by many commentators. Others (among them St. Augustine), follow the order of St. Mark (iv.), Luke (viii.), both of whom inform us, that after proposing the preceding parable to the multitude, our Redeemer passed into the country of the Gerasens; and St. Mark (iv. 35) says, that “*on that day, when evening was come, He said: Let us pass over to the other side.*” However, it may be said in reply, by the advocates of the former opinion, that from St. Mark (iv. 10) it is clear, the twelve Apostles were with Him, when He spoke the parables. Now, Matthew—one of the twelve—was not called, till *after* He crossed over to the country of the Gerasens, as appears from Matthew (viii. and ix.) Hence, the parables were not uttered till *after* that event, and the words of St. Mark, just quoted, “*that day*,” will only mean, as St. Luke has it, “*on a certain day*” (viii. 22), or about that time, *in illo tempore*.

St. Luke (iv.), according to St. Augustine, narrates, by anticipation, the arrival of our Lord at Nazareth, as is clear from the words, "*quanta audivimus facta in Capharnaum*" (iv. 23), whereas, at this time He performed no miracles at Capharnaum or anywhere else. Hence, St. Luke records this event by anticipation, because the prophecy read by him in the synagogue from Isaias (Luke iv. 18), perfectly accorded with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, which St. Luke records as having occurred previously (iii. 22), and indeed, it was a fitting preparation for the work of preaching the Gospel, which St. Luke commences to narrate.

"*He taught them in their synagogues.*" Luke (iv. 17), says He explained the prophecy of Isaias (xli. 17). "*Synagogues,*" the plural for the singular; as it is most likely, there was only *one* synagogue at Nazareth. Or, it might mean, that He taught each Sabbath at their *synagogue meetings*.

"*Wisdom,*" shown in His eloquence and reasoning. "*Miracles.*" St. Mark says (vi. 5), He wrought some miracles among them, but, "*not many,*" as we are told here (verse 58). "*Wisdom,*" in what He *said*. "*Power,*" in what He *did*.

55. "*Carpenter's son?*" Jesus was reputed to be the son of Joseph. He is Himself called a carpenter. "*Is not this the carpenter?*" (Mark vi. 3.) The Greek for "*carpenter,*" *τεκτων*, simply means, a craftsman, or workman, whether in wood, iron, gold, &c. But, the common opinion has always been, that St. Joseph was a *carpenter*, a worker in wood. Hence, Theodoret relates (Lib. iii. c. 8), that on a certain Sophist, Libanius, scornfully asking a pious Christian of his day, "*what the carpenter's son was doing?*" he received for answer, "*He is making a coffin for Julian.*" The wretched imperial apostate wanted it soon after. Transfixed mortally, by an arrow of a flying Parthian, he was obliged to cry out in despair, "*Vicisti Galilee.*" His coffin was finished. It is likely, our Lord Himself had worked in holy Joseph's workshop, during the thirty years of His hidden life at Nazareth. Hence, the Nazarites' question, "*Is not this the carpenter,*" and "*the carpenter's son?*"

"*And His brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude.*" "*His brethren*"—the children of Mary of Cleophas, sister of the Blessed Virgin, were, according to the usual style of Scripture, called "*brethren,*" that is, *cousins or near relations*, of the Redeemer.

St. Mark has it (vi. 3), "*Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon?*" Now, these *brethren* of our Lord were not, by any means, the sons of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph; but the sons of a certain Cleophas, by another Mary. For James, one of the four, is called James of Alphaeus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18); and their mother is called "*Mary, the mother of James (the less), and Joseph*" (Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40). The same Mary is called, *Mary of Cleophas* (John xix. 25). Hence, it is clear the "*brethren*" of our Lord are His cousins or relations. Thus, Lot, Abraham's nephew, is called "*his brother*" (Gen. xiii. 8), and Laban, Jacob's uncle, is called his brother also (Gen. xxix. 15).

56. "*His sisters,*" either on the side of Joseph, His reputed father, or of His mother. That they were poor, and unable to impart any learning or power to our Lord, is here manifestly insinuated. Hence, the question, "*Whence therefore hath He all these things?*" Mary, the mother of these "*brethren,*" who was *sister*, that is, cousin of the Blessed Virgin, is called "*Mary of Cleophas*" (John xix.), by which some understand, the daughter of Cleophas; others, the wife of Cleophas. Of these latter, some maintain, that this Mary was twice married, first to Alphaeus, of whom she conceived James and

Joseph—hence, James is called, “*of Alpheus*”—and after his death, to Cleophas, of whom she conceived Simon and Jude (St. Thomas). Others say, that Alpheus and Cleophas referred to the same person, both names being derived from the same common Hebrew root. (*Vide Patrizzi, Lib. iii. ix. 13.*)

Some commentators think that Alpheus was brother of St. Joseph, in which case, these would be “*brethren*,” or cousins of our Redeemer on His reputed father’s side, as well as on His mother’s side. In SS. Scripture, the words, *brother* and *sister*, are taken in a very extended sense (as above). The Blessed Virgin, according to tradition, was the only child of Joachim and Anne. Hence, Mary, the mother of these, was not her sister, as some would fain have it. St. John Damascene speaks of St. Anne as having been for a long time barren; and like Anna, the mother of Samuel, of having obtained by prayer the daughter who gave birth to the Son of God. It was by no means customary among the Jews to call two sisters by the same name. Hence, apart from other reasons, the utter improbability, that *Mary of Cleophas* was sister of the Blessed Virgin by Joachim and Anne. (See Patrizzi, Lib. iii. c. ix.)

57. “*Scandalized in His regard.*” They took occasion of offence and unbelief from the lowness of His extraction, His humble occupation, the poverty of His relatives, &c. They knew He never learned letters. “*How can this man know letters, having never learned?*” (John viii.) Hence, their unbelief, their spiritual ruin, and reprobation, “*They were scandalized.*”

“*A prophet is not without honour,*” &c. This was a celebrated adage, common among the Jews. Though *generally* true, it sometimes admits of exceptions, as in the case of John the Baptist, Isaias, Elias, Daniel, &c., who were honoured by their countrymen. It is, however, *generally* true, for which various reasons are assigned: such as the jealous feelings of envy among one’s fellow citizens; again, familiarity is apt to beget contempt, both from a close inspection of human imperfections, and also, because what is foreign, and what comes from afar, is more apt to be prized and admired by mankind, than what is domestic and easily procured.

58. “*And He wrought not many miracles,*” &c. Our Redeemer was wont to work miracles to confirm the faith of those who believed and sought for them, but not to gratify the curiosity of the incredulous. On this account it was, that He wrought so few miracles among the people of Nazareth, on account of their scornful and obstinate unbelief. Hence, St. Mark (vi. 5), “*He could not do any miracles there, only that He cured a few,*” &c., meaning, that He did not *wish* to work miracles; and, that it was not meet for Him to do so, as they had not faith; and, such miracles would only add to their responsibility, and deepen their damnation. Hence, in His mercy, He refrained from performing wonders among them.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of Herod’s opinion of our Lord, on hearing of His miracles. He takes Him for the Baptist returned from the dead. The circumstances of the cruel death of the Baptist and the causes that led to it are here recorded (1-11). Our Redeemer retires from Herod’s quarters, and crosses to the Bethsaida side of the lake. There multitudes had arrived before Him, and He miraculously multiplies bread in their favour (12-22). He obliges His disciples to enter a boat and cross before Him over the water, on which occasion, the sea being tossed by the waves, and the disciples in a state of fright, He calms their apprehension, called on

Peter to come to Him on the waters, and saves him from drowning. The vessel at once reaches the shore they were going to, which caused the disciples and the rest to fall down and adore Him (22-33). Having again crossed the water and being come to Genesar, He performs many miraculous cures there (34-36).

TEXT.

At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the fame of Jesus.

2. *And he said to his servants: This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him.*

3. *For Herod had apprehended John and bound him, and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife.*

4. *For John said to him: It is not lawful for thee to have her.*

5. *And having a mind to put him to death, he feared the people: because they esteemed him as a prophet.*

6. *But on Herod's birth-day, the daughter of Herodias danced before them: and pleased Herod.*

7. *Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask of him.*

8. *But she being instructed before by her mother, said: Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist.*

9. *And the king was struck sad: yet because of his oath, and for them that sat with him at table, he commanded it to be given.*

10. *And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.*

11. *And his head was brought in a dish: and it was given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother.*

12. *And his disciples came and took the body, and buried it, and came and told Jesus.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "At that time." What precise period is here referred to, is a subject of dispute. It happened after the beheading of the Baptist. It is inferred from the Gospel of St. John (vi. 4), that the Baptist was beheaded some time near the Pasch. For, the departure of our Redeemer on hearing of John's death (v. 13 of this chapter), is identified with that recorded (John vi. 1), when He performed the miracle of the multiplication of the bread.

Which Pasch it is that "was near at hand" (John vi. 4) is uncertain. It most likely was the *fourth Pasch*, after our Lord's baptism. Before this Pasch, John was beheaded. This occurred after the mission of the Apostles, recorded (x.), as is clear from Mark (vi. 14), Luke (ix. 7), both of whom immediately subjoin John's decollation to the narrative of the mission of the Apostles; and both say, that it was *after* the Apostles returned from their mission, our Lord was informed of the Baptist's death; and then it was, the departure of our Redeemer recorded in verse 13 of this chapter took place. St. Matthew states in this chapter (v. 13), that it was after our Redeemer heard of John's death while traversing Galilee, teaching and performing miracles, He retired and departed across the water.

"Herod." Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who put the Holy Innocents to death.

"The Tetrarch." This term designates the governor of the fourth part of a province or kingdom. Among the Romans, who divided the conquered kingdoms into Tetrarchites, the term, "*Tetrarch*," was applied to all those who exercised supreme power, and enjoyed dignity next to that of king. This Herod Antipas, was Tetrarch

of Galilee. He obtained the fourth part of his father's kingdom. Archelaus, obtained one-half, with the title of Ethnarch, and Philip governed the remaining fourth with the title of Tetrarch. This was in accordance with the will of Herod the Great, which was confirmed by the Romans. This Antipas is styled "*king*," verse 9 (Mark vi. 14). on account of the similarity between the supreme power he exercised, and that wielded by a king.

"*Heard of the fame of Jesus.*" The fame of our Redeemer's wonderful works, reached Herod only at this late hour, either, probably, on account of his absence, occasioned by the war with Aretas, the father of his former wife, divorced to make room for Herodias (Josephus Antiq. xviii. c. 7), and by his having set out for Rome before John's death, before he espoused the infamous Herodias, whom he met at his brother Philip's house, on his way to Rome (Josephus, *ibidem*); or, more probably still, on account of the negligence and indifference of immoral, wicked princes, like him, in regard to all matters appertaining to religion, and owing also to the distractions arising from a multiplicity of business occupations.

Josephus states (Antiq. xviii. 5), that the Jews were firmly persuaded, that Herod's army was cut to pieces by Aretas, king of the Arabians, as a Divine judgment, in punishment of his having put the Baptist to death.

2. "*And he said to his servants,*" that is, his domestics and familiar attendants.

"*This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead.*" Herod may have said this, because, he knew that many were, before this time, risen from the dead; such as, the son of the widow of Sarephtha (3 Kings xvii.); the man coming in contact with the bones of Eliseus (4 Kings xiii.); and the son of the widow of Sunamis (4 Kings iv.); or, it may be, that he was imbued partly with the errors of the Greeks, like many others of the Jews, who, confounding the teachings of the SS. Scriptures, regarding the resurrection of the flesh with the errors of Pythagoras, held, that the souls of the good were permitted to enter into other bodies and exist in them. This error, Josephus (Lib. 2, de Bello Jud.), attributes to the Pharisees; and hence, believing John to be raised from the dead, owing to his former virtues, and thinking him now more powerful, he adds, "*And, therefore, mighty works show forth themselves,*" &c. These words may mean, taking "*show forth*" (Vulgate, *operantur*), passively, that mighty works (*δυναμεις*)—miraculous wonders were performed by Him, as our English version has it, "*show forth themselves.*" The Greek for "*mighty works*" (*δυναμεις*), signifies miraculous wonders, or, rather, the power or faculty of performing such wonders. The Greek word for "*show forth themselves*" (*επεργουσι*), signifies, to display active energy.

"*And he said.*" In some readings it is, "*and they said,*" as if it were the opinion of others, and not the words of Herod himself that were expressed (see Mauduit, *in hunc locum*). There seems to be some difference between the account given here by the Evangelists. St. Luke (ix. 7, &c.), says, that on hearing of our Lord's miracles, Herod "*was in doubt, because it was said by some that John was risen from the dead; but by other some, that Elias had appeared; and by others, that one of the old Prophets had arisen,*" and that Herod said, "*John I have beheaded; but who is this?*" &c. (Luke ix. 7, 8, 9.) Here it is stated by St. Matthew, that Herod unhesitatingly said, it was John the Baptist come back from the dead. To reconcile both accounts, some interpreters read the words of St. Matthew interrogatively, "*Is this John the Baptist?*" "*Is he risen from the dead?*" Others say, the words are spoken ironically and jeeringly by Herod; others hold that, in public, Herod expressed his doubts, fearing a popular commotion, but in private, speaking to his familiar associates, he gives

expression to his real sentiments, regarding the resuscitation of the Baptist. Most likely, both accounts are true, and taken together, they express the real state of the case. Herod, probably, hesitatingly asserted, as did the others, that it was John the Baptist come back to life. (Luke ix.) In other words, on hearing of our Lord's miracles, and the opinion of others, that it was John come back from the dead, he first hesitated and doubted; and afterwards believing the matter, asserted it, as here.

He asserted the matter in a hesitating manner. The *hesitation* is expressed by St. Luke; the *assertion*, without any reference to the *hesitation* that accompanied it, is expressed here.

3. We are informed by Josephus (Lib. Antiq. xviii. c. 5), that Herod confined John in the fortified castle of Macherus, near the Lake Asphaltites, or Dead Sea, on the borders of Arabia Petrea. That John was delivered over to Herod by the Pharisees, or at least, that they co-operated with Herod in this matter, and, probably, stimulated by envy, strongly urged him to confine John, on grounds of public safety, is, with much probability, inferred from the words of our Lord (Matt. xvii. 12). Josephus (Lib. Antiq. xviii. c. 5), says, Herod confined John in this strong castle out of jealousy and fear of his influence with the people. This might be *one* of Herod's reasons for doing so.

"*Because of Herodias, his brother's wife.*" The Greek has, "*the wife of Philip, his brother,*" as also has the Vulgate (Mark vi. 17). There is some difference of opinion as to who this Herodias was. The common opinion seems to be, that she was daughter of Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great, by Mariamne, the last of the Asmonean kingly race. She was sister to Herod Agrippa, and, consequently, she was niece to this very Herod Antipas, who was brother to her father, Aristobulus, both brothers having different mothers. She was married to Herod Philip, brother to this Herod Antipas. Whether this was Philip, the Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (Luke iii. 1), or a different Philip, also son of Herod the Great, of whom there is no mention made in Herod's will and distribution of his dominions, and who must have, therefore, lived in a private station, is disputed. If the narrative of Josephus (Lib. Antiq. xviii. c. 5), be credited, it could not be Philip the Tetrarch (Luke iii. 1). For, he states that Herodias's daughter, by Philip—before she married Herod Antipas—named Salome, "*was married to Philip, the son of Herod, and Tetrarch of Trachonitis.*" The Philip, then, whom Herodias married first must be quite a different person. Others, rejecting this testimony of Josephus, who, they say, was deceived in this, assert, that the Philip referred to (Luke iii. 1), as Tetrarch, &c., was the first husband of Herodias. Herod Antipas, on his way to Rome (as we are informed by Josephus. *ibidem*), in the sixteenth year of Tiberius, lodged in the house of his brother Philip, for whose wife Herodias, he conceived a wicked passion; and obtained her consent to leave her husband, and live with him on his return from Rome, on condition of his sending away his wife, who was daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. This latter, on being informed of Herod's designs and resolution to espouse Herodias, fled to her father for protection, who, in defence of his daughter's honour and rights, waged war on Herod, and cut his army to pieces. (Josephus, Lib. Antiq. xviii., &c.) The Baptist sternly rebuked Herod for his incestuous and adulterous connexion with Herodias, her former husband and his own wife being still alive. Even if we suppose Philip, her former husband to be dead, as some assert, though Josephus positively states the contrary; still, Antipas, though not a Jew, any more than his father, Herod the Great, was, however, like him, a Jewish proselyte, bound by the

law of Moses, which forbade marriage with a deceased brother's wife (Lev. xviii. 16; xx. 21), save in the case of the deceased brother dying without issue (Deut. xxv. 5). In the present instance there was issue, viz., the wicked daughter spoken of in this chapter. The marriage was, therefore, unlawful. Hence, the zeal of the Baptist in reproaching Herod with this scandalous adulterous connexion—scandalous, especially, in one occupying his elevated station.

4. John having no fear of the countenance of the mighty, with Apostolic firmness and freedom of speech, neither deterred by threats, nor allured by blandishments, regardless of the consequences which he probably foresaw would cost him his head, upbraided the royal adulterer with the criminal state he was in. We are informed by St. Luke (iii. 19), that the Baptist also reproached Herod with other crimes.

5. However much Herod might have respected the virtue and sanctity of the Baptist (Mark vi. 20); still, prompted by passion and stimulated by the wicked Herodias, he was anxious to do away with him. He feared, however, to have recourse to any extreme or unnecessarily harsh measures, lest the people, who regarded John as a prophet, might resent it.

6. "*On Herod's birth-day*," which is called (Mark vi. 21) "*a convenient day*" for carrying out the designs of Herodias, regarding the Baptist—"a convenient day" for banishing the fears and scruples of Herod, touching the sentence of a violent death against the Baptist, when he made a supper for the chief men of Galilee.

"*The daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.*" The circumstance of permitting dancing during the feast, shows the voluptuousness practised in the court of Herod; for, even amongst the most abandoned of the Roman Emperors, such was not allowed.

7. Heated with wine and blinded by passion, Herod "*promised to give her whatsoever she would ask.*" St. Mark adds (vi. 23), "*though it were half his kingdom.*" This rash and foolish promise he confirmed with the solemn sanction of an oath.

8. Instructed by her mother, whom she went to consult after receiving the promise (Mark vi. 24), she asked to get on the spot, without any delay, the head of John the Baptist, lest, if time for reflection were given him, he might repent of the promise. "*Give me here on a dish, the head of John,*" &c. She wished for this, to be the more certain of his death; for, her mother dreaded lest, through the influence of the Baptist, Herod would send her away in disgrace.

9. "*The king was struck sad.*" Some are of opinion, with St. Jerome, that the king was really glad of the pretext this opportunity, as it were, afforded him, of carrying out his designs against the Baptist; and that the whole affair of the request on the part of Salome—the daughter of Herodias—was previously agreed on by common concert between Herod and his adulterous wife. Others, with St. Augustine, consider that Herod was really "*sad.*" For, besides that the Evangelist says so, in the plainest terms, it is most likely, that, although Herod, in the beginning, when he cast the Baptist into prison, would have him slain, had he not dreaded a popular commotion (v. 5); still, in the course of his imprisonment, he began to reverence his sanctity, and willingly listened to him (Mark vi. 20), and was, therefore,

sorry for the rash promise he made. Moreover, all the circumstances under which he was called upon to put him to death, the *time*, the *place*, the *odium*, attached to so *unnatural* a proceeding, were calculated to cause him real sorrow.

"*Yet because of his oath,*" &c., that is, to avoid violating his oath, as if he did not add perjury to homicide in keeping so impious and rash a promise. The observance of an oath, having for object the perpetration of evil, is no less sinful and criminal than was its original utterance. It is an insult to God to invoke Him as witness to the perpetration of evil, as if this were pleasing to Him. St. Jerome asks, if it were the head of her mother she asked, would Herod have given it to her?

"*And for them that sat with him at table.*" He did not wish to incur the reproach of fickleness or inconstancy, before the chief men of Galilee, whom he had assembled around him on the occasion (Mark vi. 21).

10. "*And he sent*" (an executioner—Mark vi. 27), "*and beheaded John in the prison.*" Josephus says, this prison was in the castle of Macherus, near the Sea Asphaltites, or Dead Sea, beyond the Jordan. This castle was in Herod's dominions; for, he ruled Galilee and the district beyond the Jordan. (Josephus, Lib. 12, Antiq.) Hence, it is inferred by some, that this great banquet was given in the castle of Macherus itself; otherwise, the head of the Baptist could not be called for and given on the spot. Others deny Josephus' account of the prison of the Baptist. They maintain, that he was imprisoned in Galilee, and that it was there Herod gave this entertainment to his nobles.

11. The mother, the wicked Herodias, was the instigator of the entire barbarous proceeding. St. Jerome (Lib. 3, contra Rufin, c. 11), tells us, that this monster made it her inhuman pastime to prick, with a bodkin, the tongue of the Saint. The same is recorded of Fulvia, in regard to Cicero. This same Herod, four years after he had treated the Redeemer of the world, as a mock king and a fool, in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, was banished, with his wicked wife, after they had been deprived of all their earthly possessions, their kingdom being added to that of Agrippa, by Caius to Lyons, in Gaul, where, we are informed by Josephus (Antiq. xviii. 7), they died in great misery, although it is said by others, and by the same Josephus, that his place of banishment by Caius was Spain, whither his wife followed him (Josephus, de Bel. Jud. ii. 9). Nicephorus (Lib. i., Histor. c. 20), and others state, that Salome, by a just judgment of God, met with a most miserable, but appropriate death. While crossing the ice in winter, it broke; and she was plunged in as far as the shoulders; then, the ice coming again together, severed her head from her body.

12. The disciples of the Baptist, who, it seems, had access to his prison (Matt. xi. 2), came, and taking away his body, had it honourably interred. St. Jerome informs us that it was interred in Sebaste, formerly called Samaria.

TEXT.

13. *Which when Jesus had heard, he retired from thence by a boat, into a desert place, apart, and the multitudes having heard of it, followed him on foot out of the cities.*

14. *And he coming forth saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them, and healed their sick.*

15. *And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying: This is a desert place, and the hour is now past: send away the multitudes, that going into the towns, they may buy themselves victuals*

16. *But Jesus said to them, They have no need to go : give you them to eat.*

17. *They answered him : We have not here, but five loaves and two fishes.*

18. *Who said to them : Bring them hither to me.*

19. *And when he had commanded the multitude to sit down upon the grass, he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes.*

20. *And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up what remained, twelve full baskets of fragments.*

21. *And the number of them that did eat, was five thousand men, besides women and children.*

COMMENTARY.

13. "*Which, when Jesus had heard.*" This is understood by some, not of what immediately precedes, relative to John's death, but to Herod's having heard of Jesus, and to the opinion expressed by him, that our Lord was John come back from the grave. The Greek, *ακούσας δὲ ὁ Ἡρῴδης*, will admit of this interpretation (vv. 1, 2). "*But Jesus, having heard it,*" as if from verse 2 to this verse 13, regarding the Baptist's death, were parenthetically introduced ; and St. Matthew, in this verse, resumed the thread of his history, broken off at verse 3. These expositors say, our Redeemer had, long before this time, heard of the Baptist's death.

Others understand it, of what immediately precedes, viz., the account of the Baptist's death. It may refer to both (vv. 1, 2), and to the death of John (vv. 10-12).

"*He retired from thence,*" to avoid Herod ; for, His "*hour had not yet come,*" thus giving an example of what He Himself taught. "*And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another*" (x. 23). St. Luke (ix.) and Mark (vi.) assign another reason, also, for His retiring, viz., to give His Apostles, who had returned from their mission, respite and leisure for retreat after their labours, so as to have a befitting opportunity of conversing with God, and of referring to Him alone the glory of all the works, which His grace enabled them to perform.

"*By a boat,*" so as to be beyond the reach of the multitude, who everywhere followed Him.

"*Into a desert place apart,*" St. Luke says (ix. 10), "*which belonged to Bethsaida.*" One class of commentators understand this of "*Bethsaida,*" on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee ; and of these, some say, our Redeemer did not cross the Sea of Galilee from east to west, but that, being on the western side, He crossed the different creeks of the western shore, thus rendering His passage shorter than if He were to travel by land along the windings of the creeks. In support of this opinion is adduced the fact, that the people "*followed Him on foot,*" and "*were before Him*" (Mark vi. 33), which could not be if He crossed the lake from west to east. Another class say, He crossed the Sea of Galilee (John vi. 1) ; and some of these hold, that the place on the east side of the lake was called the desert of Bethsaida, because the land was opposite Bethsaida, and belonged to it ; and, moreover, it is said (John vi. 17), He again recrossed the sea to Capharnaum.

Others of this latter class of interpreters say, the Bethsaida in question is not Bethsaida of Galilee, near Corozain, but another place of that name, situated on the north-eastern border of the Sea of Galilee, "*Bethsaida of Gaulonitis,*" afterwards called *Julias*, in honour of Julia, Cæsar's daughter (Josephus. Antiq. Lib. xviii. 2). It was rebuilt and enlarged by Philip the Tetrarch, shortly after the birth of our Lord. Its situation was in Lower Gaulonitis, just above the entrance of the Jordan into

the Sea of Galilee. (Josephus, de Bel. Jud. ii. viii.) Then, how could the multitude follow on foot? By crossing at the upper end of the Lake or Sea of Galilee, and fording the Jordan at that point, or, possibly, crossing it on a bridge. Their being before Him, may be accounted for in this way; the boat may have been detained by contrary winds, and our Redeemer took His time, as it were, to avoid the multitude (Calmet).

14. "*Coming forth*," from the desert place of Bethsaida, to which He had retired, or, from the mountain which He ascended with His disciples (John vi. 3). Others say, from the boat in which He sailed. (Maldonatus, Patrizzi, &c.)

"*And had compassion on them.*" St. Mark adds (vi. 34), "*because they were like sheep without a shepherd.*" He cured their sick, and taught them His heavenly doctrines.

15. "*When it was evening*:" or, as St. Luke expresses it (ix. 12), when "*the day began to decline.*" The Hebrews had two evenings, as appears from Exod. xii. 6; Lev. xxiii. 5, in which, Hebrew for "*evening*," signifies, "*between the two evenings.*" The *first*, when the sun began to decline, about three o'clock in the afternoon—to this reference is made here; the *second*, after *sunset*, or at night time—to this reference is made (v. 23). His disciples suggested to Him to dismiss the crowd, as it was growing late, and they needed food.

16. St. John (vi. 5. &c.) states, that our Redeemer, on seeing the multitude, said to Philip, for the purpose of trying him, "*Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?*" Likely, He thus spoke, after the Apostles had suggested to Him to dismiss the crowd, as St. Matthew records it here, so that both accounts contain a full statement of the entire transaction. He, probably, interrogated Philip, either because he was slower of apprehension than the other Apostles, and, by thus questioning him, He meant to impress on him the greatness of the miracle He was about to perform; or, perhaps, He asked him specially, because, being a native of Bethsaida, he was better acquainted with the resources of the district, and the places where food could be had.

It is deserving of remark, that St. John, who usually avoids mentioning what is related by the other Evangelists, especially what happened in Galilee, on this occasion refers to this miracle (c. vi.), to introduce the subject of the promised bread of life. He had, moreover, particularly in view, to describe the different Passovers during the term of our Redeemer's preaching, and, as he remained in Galilee during the third Passover, St. John relates circumstantially His works and miracles performed during that time. What is recorded by one Evangelist is not denied by the other. Both narratives form one perfect account.

Our Redeemer suggested to the Apostles to give the multitude wherewith to satiate their hunger, a thing which they regarded, humanly speaking, as utterly impossible. Mark (vi. 37) and John (vi. 7) state, that our Lord was told that two hundred pence would be necessary to procure bread, so as to give each a little, and the Apostles well knew this sum was beyond their reach. Hence, the words of Mark (vi. 37) are generally supposed to be spoken ironically, as if to say: Yes, indeed, we can give them to eat, but we require two hundred pence worth of bread for the purpose, which you know to be beyond our reach. It was only after He elicited from them an admission of the impossibility, humanly speaking, of what He asked, our Redeemer performed the miracle.

17. In order to show more clearly the utter impossibility, humanly speaking, of

satiating so large a crowd in the desert, our Redeemer asks, what resources they had at hand; and the Apostles reply, or rather Andrew replies in their name (John vi. 8, &c.), that there were only five barley loaves and two fishes, which some boy in the crowd, who, probably, was attending the Apostles, had with him for their immediate use; "*but, what are these among so many?*" (John vi. 9.)

18, 19. After commanding them to bring forward the five loaves, &c., He then ordered His disciples to arrange the men in companies, and make them sit down on the grass, with which the place abounded. This they did, arranging them in companies of hundreds and fifties (Mark vi. 40; Luke ix. 14). By this arrangement the number could be more easily ascertained, and the parties more regularly served.

"*And looking up to heaven,*" which (John vi.) expresses by "*giving thanks,*" that is, thanking His Heavenly Father, from whom, with His Divinity, He received power of working miracles, for His great goodness in vouchsafing to work so great a miracle, for the temporal and spiritual benefit of His people. It may mean, He invoked the beneficent power of his Father on the loaves, &c.

"*He took the five loaves,*" &c., to show that He was Himself the author of the great miracle He was about performing.

"*He blessed.*" St. Mark says (vi. 41), "*He blessed and brake the loaves.*" St. Luke (ix. 16) says, "*He blessed them,*" viz., the loaves; and by this benediction, imparted to them the occult efficaciousness of being multiplied.

"*And gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes.*" The miraculous multiplication probably occurred partly, in the hands of our Redeemer; and partly, in the hands of the disciples, when distributing them, and placing them in the hands of the crowd, without any outward show. *How* this occurred, we cannot say. One thing seems certain, that it was not effected by the creation of new loaves or new fishes. For, from the Evangelists, it is quite clear, "*He divided the two fishes among them all,*" as also the five barley loaves (Mark vi. 41; John vi. 11).

20. To place the miracle beyond the reach of cavil or doubt, our Redeemer ordered (John vi. 12), that, what remained after the multitude were satiated, should be gathered up. This exceeded in quantity what was originally set before our Lord to be distributed. And to show, that in the exercise of charity, economy and frugality should not be neglected, He did not wish that any of it should be lost.

"*Twelve full baskets of fragments,*" a basket for each of the Apostles.

These "*baskets*" were, probably, made of osiers. They were commonly used by the Jews on their journeys in other countries, to save their provisions from heathen contact and pollution. Their size is not known. They must certainly have been of considerable dimensions, to serve the purpose referred to. Juvenal (Satire 2-14), refers to them as badges of the Jewish people: "*Judeis, quorum Cophinus fœnunque supellex.*" Also, speaking of a fortune-telling Jewess (Satire vi. 541), he says, "*Cophino fœnoque relicto.*" The use of the *hay* was, probably, to stop the interstices of these wicker baskets, which carried their provisions and money. It is not likely they carried *hay* about with them in such quantities, as would serve for beds, as some authors imagine. Grotius remarks (Matt. xvi. 9; Mark viii. 19), "In these baskets or little panniers, they used to carry along with them, bread."

21. "*Five thousand men*" (or, as the Greek has it, ὡσεὶ πεντακισχίλιοι, "ABOUT five thousand"). St. John (vi. 10), has the same form, "ABOUT five thousand."

"*Besides women and children,*" who might, probably, amount to an equal number,

but whom it was not usual with the Jews to number. Hence, we find in the Book of Numbers, whenever the priests, and Levites, and soldiers, were numbered, the women and children were left unnumbered.

To feed a multitude in the desert was a wonderful miracle in the eyes of the Jews. "Nunquid poterit, parare mensam in deserto."

TEXT.

22. *And forthwith Jesus obliged his disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before him over the water, till he dismissed the multitudes.*

23. *And having dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, he was there alone.*

COMMENTARY.

22. Our Redeemer, perceiving that the people "*would come and make Him king*" (John vi. 15), forthwith, both from motives of prudence, and to teach us to avoid all vain display, "*obliged His disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before Him over the water.*" Mark adds (vi. 45), "*to Bethsaida,*" whilst He dismissed the crowd. The word, "*obliged,*" as St. Jerome remarks, shows the great reluctance of the Apostles to be, even for the shortest period, separated from their dear Lord. Their departure, however, would enable Him to dismiss the crowd the more readily, and prevent them from conspiring with the multitude to make Him king. It would afford Him leisure to be alone, for the purposes of prayer, and would also prepare the way for the miracle of calming the sea, which followed. Perhaps the reluctance on the part of the disciples to depart, arose from seeing the glory which awaited their Master, from the crowd, who wished to make Him king. They were ordered to cross the lake in the direction of Bethsaida, but they came to Capharnaum. (John vi.) Capharnaum and Bethsaida of Galilee were both on the western shore of the lake, so there is no contradiction between St. Mark and St. John. They went towards Bethsaida, but they reached Capharnaum, it might be, after having first arrived at Bethsaida, on the west shore of the lake; or, it may be, they sailed first to Capharnaum, and then to Bethsaida, which was not far distant (Patrizzi in Marcum vi. 45).

23. After the disciples set out on the lake, and the multitude was dismissed, our Redeemer went alone up into the mountain to pray; to teach us, that we must, after His Divine example, sometimes retire from the society of men, in order to communicate in prayer with our Heavenly Father; and, in the solemn silence of retreat, lay open to Him our wants, and crave His Divine protection.

"*When evening was come.*" As the Evangelist had referred already (v. 15) to evening, interpreters infer the Jews reckoned two evenings (see v. 15).

TEXT.

24. *But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary.*

25. *And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking upon the sea.*

26. *And they seeing him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying: It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear.*

27. *And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good heart; it is I, fear ye not.*

28. *And Peter making answer, said: Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters.*

29. *And he said: Come. And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus.*

30. *But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid: and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me.*

31. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?*

32. *And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased.*

33. *And they that were in the boat came and adored him, saying: Indeed thou art the Son of God.*

COMMENTARY.

24. The darkness and adverse winds, together with the absence of our Lord, added to their danger, and heightened their terrors. This is more clearly expressed (John vi. 17). This storm was purposely caused by our Divine Redeemer, in order to try their faith and confidence in Him during His absence.

25. "*And in the fourth watch of the night,*" or, about three o'clock in the morning, "*He came to them,*" &c. Formerly, the Jews divided the night, in their military arrangements, into *three* watches, of four hours each. The first was called the beginning of the watch (Jeremias Lament. ii. 19). The second, the middle watch, at which those who were on guard, in the first watch, were relieved and succeeded by others (Judg. vii. 19). The third, and last watch, was called, *the morning watch* (Exod. xiv. 24). St. Luke refers to this (xii. 38). But the Romans divided the nights into *four* watches, dividing the night, from sunset to sunrise, according to the season of the year, into four equal parts. The hours were, of course, according to this arrangement, shorter, or longer, according to the season of the year. At the Equinoxes, the first watch was from six in the evening till nine; the second from nine till twelve; the third from twelve till three in the morning, and the fourth from three till six, or sunrise. In the time of our Lord, the Jews had adopted this Roman division of time into *four* watches. The Apostles were tossed about by the tempest during the entire night. By walking on the sea, our Redeemer showed, in a remarkable way, His Divine power. It is specially said of God, in the Book of Job (ix. 8-10), "*Who alone spreadeth out the heavens and walketh upon the waves of the sea,*" making this one of His Divine qualities or attributes. "*Walking upon the sea.*" "*Upon*" (ἐπὶ), is used with a verb of motion.

26. Unable, owing to the darkness, to distinguish the object they saw walking on the waters, and to recognise our Divine Lord, the Apostles were affrighted, taking Him for a spectre, or, "*apparition.*" It was the common belief among the Jews, which was also in accordance with Scripture, and asserted by the Pharisees, who maintained the existence of spirits, that these spirits sometimes appeared, clad in human form. Night was commonly believed to be the time for evil spirits, known to injure man, to make their appearance. Hence, the affright of the Apostles, who imagined the apparition, which now presented itself, to be ominous of coming shipwreck.

"*And they cried out for fear.*" This loud and confused cry indicated their excessive fear.

27. When their fears reached the highest pitch, our Redeemer, at once, allays them, saying: "*Be of good heart,*" in a tone of voice, which at once assured them, and convinced them of His Divine presence. "*Be of good heart,*" give up all fears. "*It is I,*" from whom you have nothing to fear, who heretofore rescued you from so many

perils. These words, "*It is I,*" are allusive to the description the Almighty gave of Himself, in addressing Moses, "*SUM QUI SUM.*" (Exod. iii.)

28. Peter's faith and love are everywhere conspicuous. With his usual ardour, he believes he can do, at the command of his Master, what by nature was impossible; and in reward for his holy ardour and eagerness to be with his Lord, our Redeemer works a miracle in his favour. The word, "*if,*" does not argue any want of faith in our Lord, on the part of Peter. It only proves that Peter might doubt His identity, or the *fact*, whether it was our Lord or not. The words, "*Lord,*" and "*bid me come,*" &c., show the great reverence and confidence he had in his Divine Master. "*Come to Thee.*" He does not say simply, "*come;*" but, "*come to THEE,*" to show his eagerness to be with his Lord. Nor does he beg of our Lord to come to him, out of modesty and humility. That Peter was not guilty of arrogance in this request, is clear from our Redeemer's granting it. And, although an evil spirit or spectre might deceitfully tell him come; still, Peter's request involved more than simply telling him to come. It involved also a request to be granted the confidence and power to walk upon the waters, and the efficacy of this command Peter felt, when he found the waters bear him up after he received it.

29. Being convinced that it was his Lord that addressed him, both from the confidence he inspired, and the virtue He induced him with, &c., Peter at once leaves the ship to come to his Divine Master.

30, 31. But, in order to show Peter that the faith which made him walk upon the waters was still weak, and to give him an opportunity of increasing his faith, and of experiencing the power and goodness of God in regard to those who invoke Him in the hour of tribulation, our Redeemer exposes him to a new temptation. The Evangelist remarks, "*seeing the wind strong, he feared,*" as if to convey to us, that as long as Peter had his eye fixed on our Lord, the liquid element yielded not to his steps; but the moment he began to view the raging of the waves, the force of the winds, and his own weakness, then he begins to lose all confidence, and to sink; but his faith again saves him. He cries out, "*Lord, save me;*" and then, his Lord exercising his office of Saviour, mercifully rescues him; and as Divine teacher, He informs him—"modice fidei," &c.—that it was not the violence of the winds, but his own imperfect faith, that caused the danger he had been in.

32. "*And when they were come up into the boat,*" &c. St. John (vi. 21), says, "*they were willing, therefore, to take him into the ship, and presently the ship was at the land, to which they were going.*"

This is not opposed to the account given here by St. Matthew. The Apostles were desirous of taking our Redeemer into the ship, as St. John states, and our Redeemer, as St. Matthew tells us here, gratifying their desires, did actually enter the ship.

"*They were willing to take Him*" (John vi. 21), *εθελον λαβειν*, is an idiomatic phrase for, *εθελοντως ελαβον*—"they willingly received Him" (Bloomfield). A twofold miracle followed, the storm at once abated, and the ship at once reached land. So there were five miracles altogether connected with it—1. Our Lord's walking on the sea. 2. Peter's walking on it by His aid. 3. When sinking, Peter is raised. 4. The sudden ceasing of the storm. 5. The arrival at land, at once.

33. The sailors who owned the boat, and the Apostles, who were in the boat with

them "*adored Him*;" προσεκίνησαν, means, *prostrate adoration* (see ii. 11). "*Indeed, Thou art the Son of God*," that is, the promised Messiah, not merely the *adopted*, but the *natural* Son of God, such as He proclaimed Himself, and the Pharisees denied Him to be (John v. 18-33; xix. 7). Others say, there is question of the Son of God by *excellence*, and not by *nature*; because, according to them, these ignorant sailors, who, with the Apostles, *adored* our Lord, did not know the mystery of the Trinity, which others answer by saying, they received this knowledge in the boat by revelation.

St. Mark (vi. 51), says, that seeing the miracle of His walking on the sea, the cessation of the wind, &c., the Apostles were more and more astonished, and he assigns as a reason (v. 52), "*for, they understood not concerning the loaves; for, their heart was blinded*."

They were so stupified by the storm and the danger they were in, that they did not attend to the greater miracle of the multiplication of the loaves which our Lord had performed; otherwise, they would not have been astonished at the greatness of the present miracle. Our Divine Lord permitted them to be sorely tried after He had performed the preceding miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, in order that they would the more readily acknowledge Him in the evils which befell them. For, we are generally more affected by the sense of misfortune, than we are by the enjoyment of blessings—and, indeed, as it is most likely, that among these, "*that were in the boat*," were included the Apostles, we can hardly suppose, that they, at least, who having lived so long with our Redeemer, heard His discourses, witnessed His many miracles, and must, therefore, by this time, have believed Him to be the *natural* Son of God, could have uttered the words, "*Indeed, Thou art the Son of God*," in any other sense, save that they professed their faith in His Divinity, which the present miracle tended to strengthen. "*And presently the ship was at the land to which they were going*" (John vi. 21).

TEXT.

34. *And having passed the water, they came into the country of Genesar.*

35. *And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent into all that country, and brought to him all that were diseased.*

36. *And they besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment. And as many as touched, were made whole.*

COMMENTARY.

34. "*Genesar*;" or, as Mark has it, "*Genesareth*" (vi. 53), is not to be confounded with Gerasa (Matt. viii. 28), whose people besought Him to depart from them, after the herd of swine was drowned.

"*Genesareth*," was some distance from Bethsaida, to which our Lord ordered His disciples to repair (Mark vi. 45). It was on the same side of the lake—the western side—with Capharnaum and Bethsaida. From Genesareth our Lord went to Capharnaum, where He delivered the discourse on the blessed Eucharist, recorded by St. John, chap. vi. In this way the accounts given by St. Matthew are perfectly reconciled with that given by St. John, chap. vi.

35. As soon as He put to shore at Genesareth (Mark vi. 53), early in the morning, after the night's storm, and had disembarked, He was recognised; and on His way, during the day, to Capharnaum, through towns and villages, the rumour of His arrival having preceded Him, they brought all their sick, &c. (Mark vi. 55), all who were diseased and labouring under bodily infirmities, and laid them in the streets through which He passed (Mark vi. 56).

36. And besought Him to allow them *"to touch but the hem of His garments. And as many as touched, were healed."*

Hence, the reverence paid by Catholics to relics is fully vindicated. Our Redeemer, here, far from condemning, as superstitious, the respect and reverence paid to the clothes which He wore, even directly sanctions it, by working miracles in approval of it. It is on the same principle which influenced the Jews in touching the hem of our Redeemer's garments, of which our Lord clearly approves, while He worked miracles in sustinment of it, that the Catholic Church sanctions the reverence paid to sacred relics.

CHAPTER XV

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of a charge made by the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, against our Lord, of having violated certain traditions regarding purifications and washings, on the occasion of partaking of food (1-2). He retorts upon them, and shows that they violated, by these boasted traditions, the law of God and nature, with reference to the honour due to parents (4-9), and He explains to the people the true doctrine regarding interior defilement, and whence it comes (11). He tells His disciples to pay no heed to the scandal the Pharisees affected to conceive from His teaching (12-14). He, in reply to the request of His disciples, explains the doctrine of interior purity and defilement (15-23). He next cures the daughter of the Chanaanite woman, at her earnest, persevering, and humble solicitation, and praises her great faith, which, as it were, forced Him to perform the miraculous cure (21-28). He cured great multitudes near the sea of Galilee. He performs a miracle, by the multiplication of bread, to satiate a large multitude (29-38).

TEXT.

THEN came to him from Jerusalem Scribes and Pharisees, saying :

2. *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients ? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*

3. *But he answering, said to them : Why do you also transgress the commandments of God for your tradition ? For God said :*

4. *"Honour thy father and mother : " And " He that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death."*

5. *But you say : Whosoever shall say to father or mother, The gift whatsoever proceedeth from me, shall profit thee.*

6. *And he shall not honour his father or his mother : and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition.*

7. *Hypocrites, well hath Isaiah prophesied of you, saying :*

8. *"This people honoureth me with their lips : but their heart is far from me.*

9. *And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men."*

10. *And having called together the multitudes unto him, he said to them : Hear ye and understand.*

11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man : but what cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

12. *Then came his disciples, and said to him : Dost thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized ?*

13. *But he answering, said : Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*

14. *Let them alone : they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.*

15. *And Peter answering said to him : Expound to us this parable.*

16. *But he said : Are you also yet without understanding ?*

17. *Do you not understand, that whatsoever entereth into the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the privy.*

18. *But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man.*

19. *For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.*

20. *These are the things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doth not defile a man.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Then,*" denotes a continuation of the preceding history. It means, about the time our Redeemer was performing so many miracles, and was occupied in the country of "*Genesar,*" "*then,*" took place the occurrence referred to here; probably, after He had delivered the heavenly discourse regarding the promise of the Adorable Eucharist. (John vi.) We are informed by St. John (vii. 1), that, although the Passover was at hand (John vi. 4), our Redeemer walked in Galilee, keeping away from Judea, for fear of the Jews. From the words of the Evangelist, it is inferred that our Redeemer did not ascend to Jerusalem, to celebrate the Pasch, on this occasion, as His life was in danger. This is the opinion of St. Thomas. Others, on the contrary, hold that He did ascend to Jerusalem on this occasion. At all events, if He did go there, His stay must have been very short.

"*Came to Him from Jerusalem Scribes,*" &c. Although Scribes and Pharisees were scattered everywhere throughout the Jewish people, still, those belonging to Jerusalem being reputed the most learned among them, and best versed in the law, were as such, entitled to deliver instructions wherever they went. They were also the most arrogant of the sect. Seeing that our Lord did not make His appearance at Jerusalem; or, if He did, that His stay was very short, these Scribes and Pharisees, either of their own accord, or, which is more likely, by the delegation of the Sanhedrim, came down to Galilee, for the purpose of examining narrowly into the teaching of this new Doctor, who everywhere instructed the people without asking any commission from them; that thus they might secure materials for afterwards accusing Him.

2. "*Why do Thy disciples,*" &c. They durst not directly accuse Himself; but they thus indirectly accuse Him, as if the subject matter of their charge had His sanction and permission. They adopt the same crooked course, on the subject of fasting (ix. 14). St. Mark (vii. 2) informs us, that these Scribes, &c., "*had seen some of our Redeemer's disciples eat bread with unwashed hands,*" and found fault with them. (The words, "*eat bread,*" is a Hebrew phrase, signifying, "*to take food.*") St. Mark next describes the Jewish, or Pharisaical observances in this respect, recommended by the founders of their sect, such as washing their cups, and the couches whereon they reclined, when at meals; washing themselves before meals, and after returning from the market, &c. These observances were founded on two false principles. 1st. That legal defilements were sins reaching the soul; whereas, such were often contracted in the exercise of works of charity, such as burying the dead, assisting those infected with leprosy, &c. 2ndly. That legal external purifications reached the soul, and cleansed it from sin. St. Paul (Heb. ix. 13) points out the real effect of legal purifications.

"*The tradition of the ancients.*" They do not charge them with violating the law; because the law was silent on the multitude of these traditional observances; neither

do they say, "*our traditions*," but, "*of the ancients*," as if, to show they were transmitted from an early date, and thus entitled to the greatest reverence and respect. These traditions were explanations of the law made by their forefathers, and called, the *Oral Law*; because, not given in writing, as was the written law of Moses. The Jews in general, professed for them as much respect as for the law of Moses. These traditions were collected in seventy-two books, and composed the *Cabbala*. They were kept, it is said, by Gamaliel, and other heads of the Sanhedrim, until the destruction of Jerusalem, &c. It is to these traditions St. Paul refers, when he says (Gal. i.), "*abundantius, amulator fraternarum traditionum*." For, he was, "*secundum Legem Pharisaus*." "*For, they do not wash their hands, when they eat bread*." This is the point of accusation. This washing of hands was insisted on, not so much as a matter of social decency, of which our Redeemer and His disciples were not, probably, neglectful, as a matter of religious duty. "*When they eat bread*." It is disputed, whether this regards washing before sitting down to meals, or the frequent washings which took place during meals (Mark vii. 3). That the Jews had usually vessels prepared for the purpose of purification, is clear from John (ii. 6). Whether this purification took place *before* or *during* meals, is not quite certain. It is in favour of the latter, that he says, "*when they eat bread*," as if it occurred during the eating of bread. It shows the irreproachable conduct of our Lord, and the malice of the Pharisees, that having nothing serious whereof to accuse Him, they descend to such trifles, no way connected with piety. Their superstition also is betrayed, in insisting on outward observances, not commanded by the law of God, and only emblems of exterior purity. The Pharisees were very observant of external observances, while neglectful of internal purity (Matt. xxiii. 27).

3. Our Redeemer, without excusing the conduct of His disciples, as censurable, or praising it, lest He might incur odium, retorts upon His enemies, whom He knew to be actuated solely by feelings of malice and envy, and shows, that *they* were not the parties to bring any charge on this subject of traditions, who themselves were guilty of greater transgressions on this score; since they observed traditions which were opposed to the *written* law of God, and the law of *nature* itself. Of this violation, He furnishes an example. He repels their frivolous reprehension, by a grave charge to the contrary—"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God," &c. Instead of this interrogative form which Matthew alone has, and to which he subjoins (v. 6), a positive assertion, that the Pharisees *did* transgress the commandment of God, and then concludes with the testimony of Isaias; St. Mark commences with the testimony of the Prophet; and then subjoins the declaration (vii. 9), which St. Matthew places in the beginning. It is a matter of indifference which order we adopt. It is in favour of the order observed by St. Mark, that, after quoting the prophetic testimony and applying it, he shows, that the Pharisees had transgressed, in a twofold way, against the commandments of God by their traditions—1st. By neglecting the commandments of God, whilst they were scrupulously observant of human traditions, of themselves indifferent. "*Leaving the commandments of God, you hold the traditions of men, the washing of pots, of cups*," &c. (vii. 8.) 2ndly. They handed down certain constitutions subversive of God's law (v. 9). The same example is quoted as here (v. 4).

"For, God said." Mark has, "*For, Moses said*;" but it is the same. For, God said it through Moses.

4. "*Honour thy father and mother*." &c. "*Honour*," embraces all the duties which

children owe their parents; and, therefore, the duty of supporting them. "*Honour*" signifies, in many parts of Scripture, to *support, to afford sustenance*; (1 Tim. v. 3), "*Honour widows,*" &c.; (v. 17), "*worthy of double honour.*" It has the same meaning here, as is clear from our Redeemer regarding as a violation of it, "*Whosoever shall say . . . the gift . . . and he shall not honour his father,*" &c. This is most clearly expressed by St. Mark (vii. 12), "*And farther, you suffer him not to do anything,*" &c. Therefore, to serve one's parents, and act beneficently towards them, is to *HONOUR* them. Although the Pharisees had been guilty of violating God's commandments in many other ways, by their traditions (Mark vii. 13); still, our Redeemer quotes this one, about not honouring parents, as being the Divine precept, to which a special promise is attached, "*that thou mayest be long-lived upon earth,*" &c. and as the precept, which is clearly and strictly enjoined by the natural law. And to show the imperative obligation of this precept, and the impiety of the Pharisees, our Redeemer subjoins another law, inflicting death, without mercy, on such as utter contumelious words against their parents. "*He that shall curse his father,*" &c., which is not so great a dishonour as that of which the Pharisees were guilty, in act, by withholding from their parents the necessary means of support.

5. Such are the commandments of God. "*But, you*"—following certain absurd traditions, at variance with the laws of God and nature—"say: *Whosoever shall say to his father or mother,*" &c., when, in their distress, they apply to him for support, that is to say, for that "*honour,*" to which the laws of God and nature strictly entitle them.

"*The gift whatsoever proceedeth from me,*" &c. Of the several interpretations given of this obscure passage, there are *two*, which seem the most probable. The first interpretation runs thus: "*Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, whatsoever gift* *proceedeth from me*"—that is to say, *whatsoever gift has been presented by me in God's honour, and for His service—"shall profit thee,"* also; because presented for benefiting you, as well as myself, and for propitiating Him in your favour; and, hence, I have discharged the duty of honouring you, and am no longer bound to assist you: *such a person shall have fulfilled his obligations to his parents.* These, or words like the following, *such a person shall be free from sin,* &c., are understood to complete the second member of the sentence, commencing with the words, "*whosoever shall say,*" &c. 1st Inter

According to this interpretation of the tradition of the Pharisees referred to, the parents received some corporal support, inasmuch as a portion of the things offered in some sacrifices, *v.g.*, peace offerings, &c., went to the benefit of the offerers. Most likely, the Pharisees justified this perverse tradition on the grounds—(1st) That God was to be honoured rather than one's parents; as if God would receive honour from the offering of things due to others, by the Divine, as well as by the natural law, which, therefore, could not become the matter of vows. So far is this from being the case, that even things consecrated to God may be lawfully applied to the relief of our neighbour's grievous necessities, as in the case of the loaves of proposition consumed, in his necessity, by David; and we frequently find the holy vessels broken or sold by some of the most eminent saints, to relieve the starving poor. Nay, it is held that a son cannot enter religion, should he be required for his parent's support, and even that he should in some cases, leave religion, if the necessary support of his parents required it. (2^{ndly}) That the gift presented to God, with the intention of benefiting parents, contained the twofold merit of piety towards one's parents, which alone was involved in the observance of the fourth precept of the Decalogue; and of piety, or rather of religion, towards God; as if they could be truly pious in regard to God, (g)

who neglect His precept, commanding them to support their parents, and assuring us that what is done for one of the least ones is done for Him.

Interp. The second interpretation runs thus: "*Whosoever shall say,*" &c. Whatsoever you could expect from me for your own support and benefit; nay, all my possessions, are already vowed to God, as a gift, and I cannot transfer them from God to you, such a person shall have fulfilled his duty. Many among the Pharisees were priests; and their avarice was gratified, or rather, promoted by such a tradition, inasmuch as they profited by the gifts offered in the temple; and hence, in defiance of God's law, they inculcated this odious tradition, on the subject of *honouring*, or, rather, *dishonouring*, parents.

This *second* interpretation accords well with the words of St. Mark (vii. 11), "*Corban* (*which is a gift*), *whatsoever is from me, shall profit thee.*" From this, it is clear, there is question of a gift consecrated and set apart for religious purposes, which is the signification of "*Corban.*" In the Greek the words run thus: "*A gift, whatsoever thou mightest have been profited by me,*" as if to say, whatever it is, through which you wished me to confer a benefit on you, is already a gift, and, as Mark has it, a sacred gift, *Corban.*

6. "*And he shall not honour his father,*" &c. Some commentators make these words a portion of the Pharisaical tradition, thus: "*And so, he may not honour his father or his mother,*" or shall be exempted from the precept of honouring them. This is warranted by the *Codex Vaticanus*, in which "*and,*" is wanting. According to the reading of the *Codex Vaticanus*, the whole sentence is complete without any addition, thus: "*Whosoever shall say to his father or mother: The gift whatsoever from me shall profit thee, may not honour his father or mother,*" that is, shall be exempted from the obligation of honouring them.

Others say, these are the words of our Redeemer, asserting that the son, in the case in question, violates the precept of honouring his parents, while carrying out the Pharisaical traditions.

"*And you have made void,*" &c. And thus, it follows, that you have made void the precept of God, relative to the honouring of parents, by reason of your tradition. He says, "*your tradition,*" not, "*the tradition of the ANCIENTS,*" to show that these traditions were of recent introduction, on the part of those who claimed for their absurd traditional ordinances, all the authority of the ancients, whose place they occupied.

7. "*Ye hypocrites.*" The word, ὑποκριτής, in its original signification, denotes an actor in a drama—one who personates a different character. Here, it is applied to the Scribes and Pharisees, who affected a character for piety and religion, which they really did not possess, and were content with mere *external* observances; and while they affected to be most scrupulous in the observance of the law, violated it in its most important precepts.

"*Well did Isaias prophesy of you, saying.*" The words which our Redeemer quotes from Isaias had primarily reference to the Jews of the Prophet's own time; but as his words, by *accommodation*, apply to the Jews of our Redeemer's time; or, rather, as Isaias addressed the Jewish people in general, with whom the Jews of our Redeemer's time were morally identified; hence, He says, "*he prophesied of them,*" as follows.

8. "*This people honoureth,*" &c. This quotation from Isaias (xxix. 13) is according to the Septuagint, in which, the passage runs thus: "*This people approaches Me,*" *i.e.,*

reverences Me, "*with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.*" The words, "*approaches Me with their mouth,*" are read in the ordinary Greek copies, but are wanting in the *Codex Vaticanus*, and in all Latin copies. In the words of this verse, our Redeemer shows, that the Pharisees were, what He designated them, viz., hypocrites, such as the Jews described by the Psalmist (Psa. lxxvii), "*et dilexerunt eum in ore suo, et lingua sua mentiti sunt ei,*" &c.

9. "*And in vain,*" &c. In this verse, He refers to their foolish, superstitious observances. "*In vain,*" Greek (*ματην*), may either mean, they vainly worship Me, inasmuch as they do not obtain the fruit of My worship; or, it may denote their foolish, irrational observances, which is rendered, by the interpreter of St. Matthew, "*sine causa;*" for, that worship is vain which is without a rational cause.

"*Teaching doctrines and commandments of men.*" In the Septuagint of Isaias, and also in all the Greek copies of the Gospel of St. Matthew and St. Mark, "*and*" is wanting. It runs thus: "*teaching doctrines, commandments of men,*" placing the latter word in apposition to the former. From the context, is clearly seen what it is our Redeemer here reprobates as "*the doctrines and commandments of men.*" They are doctrines and commandments, opposed to the law of God, such as is instanced in the case of honouring or dishonouring parents; or, silly, external, superstitious observances, inculcated as obligatory, which by no means contribute to true, internal piety, such as frequent washing of hands at meals, washing of cups, of couches, &c.; or, erroneous doctrines, such as, that meat defiles the soul (Mark vii. 5-8). Are the precepts and ordinances and traditions of the Catholic Church of this character? Surely not. Far from being subversive of the Divine law, they rather enforce and reduce it to practice. As to Apostolical traditions, St. Paul tells the Thessalonians to stand fast by them and hold them (2 Thess. ii. 14). As to the rules and constitutions of the Church touching fasts, festivals, and the like, they are by no means opposed to the Divine law; they are, on the contrary, in perfect accordance with it. And, moreover, they emanate from God Himself, who, invested His Church with legislative power, and has commanded all to hear, and obey her, under pain of sharing the fate of the heathen and the publican. In truth, the very ordinances of the civil power cannot be regarded as "*commandments of men,*" in the sense here contemplated; since their power, too, is from God, at least mediately, and we are commanded to obey them under pain of damnation. (Rom. xiii.) But, as regards the laws of the Church, they are ordinances enacted under the inspiration, or, at least, superintendence and influence of the Holy Ghost, whom Christ promised to His Church, to teach her all truth, and remain with her for ever, under His own special guidance, who, moreover, promised to remain Himself with His Church all days, even to the consummation of the world.

10. Having redargued the Pharisees, and silenced them, He now calls the multitude, and in their hearing, who were not influenced by feelings of envy, like the Pharisees, and would derive profit from His instructions, He justifies the conduct of His disciples, and shows the error of the Pharisees on the subject.

"*Hear ye.*" St. Mark has, "*Hear ye Me all*" (vii. 14). These words are intended to arrest attention. "*Me,*" and not the Pharisees; "*and understand,*" that is, divesting yourselves of your former errors, attend to My true doctrine.

11. "*Not that which goeth into the mouth,*" &c., which is read thus in St. Mark, "*There is nothing from without a man that entering him can defile him*" (vii. 15). These words are to be interpreted in reference to the teaching of the Pharisees, which they

are intended to refute. The Pharisees maintained, that, by partaking of food with unwashed hands, defilement was imparted to the food, and this food defiled the soul. Our Redeemer refutes this by saying, that no food, *of itself*, defiles a man. Hence, no food partaken with unwashed hands defiles him (v. 20). The Pharisees held that certain kinds of food, *of themselves*, defile a man, and render him polluted before God. Hence, we find St. Paul, in refuting these doctrines, held by certain Judaizing heretics, say, "*that every creature of God is good*," &c. Then, our Redeemer here says, that, no food, *of its own nature*, defiles us. In this, He by no means intends to assert that we do not sin by partaking of food, if we do so, contrary to the prohibition of God, as did Adam; or, as the Jews would, by partaking of food forbidden to them; or, the first Christians, had they violated the Apostolical injunction, commanding them to abstain from blood, &c. (Acts xv. 20); or, Christians, now-a-days, if they violated the laws of fasting enjoined by the Church, whom all are bound to hear and obey. In like manner, a man by committing excess in drinking wine is defiled, for "*drunkards shall not possess the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. vi. 10); not by the wine, but, by its excess against the laws of temperance. But in such cases, "*it is not what goeth into the mouth that defiles; but what cometh from it*," viz., disobedience and resistance to the law of God and the dictates of right reason. Hence, the words do not furnish even the shadow of an objection against the discipline of the Catholic Church, in regard to fasting, prescribed for the castigation of our rebellious flesh, as a spiritual remedy and antidote against sin, as a necessary means of casting out certain devils, and of overcoming certain passions, particularly those having reference to incontinence. They would equally militate against the precept given by God to Adam; against the law given by Moses to the Jews; against the injunctions given by the Apostles to the first Christians; against the prohibition of St. Paul in regard to Idolothytes, who calls the chalice of those partaking of them, "*the chalice of devils*," and against the charitable line of conduct pursued by the same Apostle, and inculcated on others, when he declared they should, in conscience, abstain from certain kinds of meat, to avoid scandalizing their weak and infirm brethren. (1 Cor. vi.) Would they not militate also against the prescriptions of physicians, when they interdict their patients certain kinds of food? The error of the Scribes, &c., was occasioned by the prohibition (Lev. xi.), to partake of unclean meats, such as swine's flesh, &c., as unclean, abominable, and defiling the soul. The Scribes understood these words in a gross, material sense, as if these meats immediately, and by contact, defiled the soul, as the touch of an unclean animal caused legal defilement in him who touched it. In this, they were grossly deceived; because, these words referred only to legal or external defilement.

"*But what cometh out of the mouth*," &c., that is, the things that come from the mouth and the heart (v. 18), that proceed from the will of man, these are the things that defile him. Our Redeemer does not mean, that everything coming from the mouth defiles a man, such as good words; nor that those things only which come from the mouth defile a man; since, bad thoughts and bad actions have this effect. But He uses this form, as it expresses the contrary of what the Pharisees held. They said, that what enters the mouth defiles; He says, on the contrary, that it was the things that came forth from the mouth—although not these alone, nor all that came—that defile a man. Good words come forth and good thoughts remain in the mind. What our Redeemer wishes to convey is this, that it is from the *will* of man, the things which defile him, proceed, which is more clearly expressed by St. Mark (vii. 20), "*The things which come out from a man, they defile a man*," and is also clearly expressed, verses 18, 19, of this chapter.

12. His disciples, perceiving from the countenance of the Pharisees, and the words of murmur privately uttered, that His doctrine gave them offence; and, moreover, not seeming themselves to understand it, are desirous of further explanations, and inform him that the Pharisees, who, by their influence, might prove formidable enemies, and whom, therefore, it might be prudent to conciliate, were "*scandalized*," *i.e.*, offended at His doctrine. They took offence, because the doctrine just enunciated by our Lord, was totally subversive of their traditional customs, regarding frequent washings, &c. The disciples themselves were not wholly at ease, as His doctrine seemed opposed to the law of Moses.

13. Our Redeemer told His disciples not to be disquieted or troubled about the offence of the Pharisees. "*Every plant which My Father hath not planted*," &c. Some understand the word, "*plant*," of doctrine; every doctrine not proceeding from God, shall come to nought. Similar is the celebrated decision of Gamaliel, "*If this counsel be from God*," &c. (Acts v. 38), and thus, our Redeemer wishes to convey, that the doctrine of the Pharisees, which is purely of human invention and introduction, must have an end, and that the system they had instituted, as well as their sect, was fast falling to ruin. This is not opposed to the Jewish law, which was planted only for a *time* by God—as regarded its legal and ceremonial parts, and it lasted for the term designed by God—but as to its *moral* parts, it has lasted, and shall last still to the end of time. He thus quiets their apprehensions about the danger to be apprehended from the power of the Pharisees.

Others understand the word, "*plant*," of men themselves, viz., the Scribes and Pharisees. Men are frequently called the *planting* of God, in SS. Scriptures. Every man was placed and *planted* by God, in the field of this world; but, by the envy of the devil, this primeval creation was vitiated, and, hence, man must again be, as it were, planted anew, and ingrafted on Christ, the tree of life. In this sense, the Jews are termed, *vinca electa, germen plantationis mee* (Isa. lx. 21; Matt. iii. 10). Those who are not thus ingrafted, remain in their original state of spiritual decay, and shall be lost. Of this class are the Pharisees, who incurably resisted our Redeemer's gracious calls and teaching; and, hence, could not be ingrafted on Him, and were not, therefore, to be minded, nor their offence cared for.

14. "*Let them alone.*" Heed not the offence which arises solely from their own malice and perversity. "*They are blind.*" By their own free will, they perversely continue in their blind state, and they are so presumptuous as to attempt to become the guides of others equally blind and obstinate, in their perverse opinions, as themselves. And the end of such teachers, and of those taught by them, shall be eternal, irreparable ruin—"both fall into the pit."

These arrogant, haughty men, so wedded to their own opinions—so self-conceited as to become the leaders of others, as obstinate as themselves, cannot be conciliated by any advances made to them. They will only take further offence at every attempt at explanation. They are, therefore, not to be heeded, but to be left to the ruin they are obstinately bringing on themselves. From these words of our Lord we may conclude, that when men conceive offence at our teaching, solely out of malice, and without any cause on our own part, we are not to heed such Pharisaical scandal. "For, it is better that scandal should arise, than that the truth be abandoned" (St. Gregory). It is otherwise, if this proceeds from weakness or ignorance, or, if there be question of *scandalum infirmorum*. Then, we are by all means, to avert the ruin of our infirm brother. Our Redeemer gives an example of both modes of acting in the

different treatment He gave the Pharisees and His own disciples. He minds not the one (v. 14), while He gives a full explanation to the others (vv. 17-19).

15. "*Peter*," whose faith was always most ardent, "*answering*"—a Hebrew form of expression, meaning that he commenced to speak (xi. 25), "*said to Him*," speaking in the name of the other disciples. The disciples are said to have spoken (Mark vii. 17), through Peter, as their spokesman, and this is borne out by the words, "*expound* (not to *me*, but) to us, *this parable*." The word, "*parable*," is taken here in its genuine signification, as meaning any obscure form of language. This, as we are informed by St. Mark (vii. 17), occurred "*when He was come into the house from the multitude*." The disciples could not understand how this language of our Lord, about the promiscuous use of food, could, in its plain, literal meaning, be consistent with the prohibition of the law of Moses; nor, how the use of language, so calculated to scandalize the Pharisees, and, in a certain degree, to scandalize themselves, could be reconciled with His teaching on the subject of avoiding giving scandal to our neighbour. Hence, they call it a "*parable*," or an obscure form of speech, bearing a meaning different from what it bore at first sight. This they wished Him to explain to them.

16. *Are you also yet without understanding?* "You, who have so long walked in the light of My doctrine, and have been familiar and intimate friends, to whom had been already frequently explained, in what real purity of soul consists. While reproving them for slowness of belief, He removes the offence, arising from mental infirmity, and more fully explains His doctrine.

17. "*Whatsoever entereth into the mouth*." The greater part of the food we take, "*goeth into the belly*," from the stomach, and is discharged or evacuated in the shape of excrement. A portion of it remains in the system, imparting strength and vital vigour. This point, however, our Redeemer does not consider here. He only accommodates His explanation to the gross conceptions of His disciples. He shows that the food which we receive, "*entereth not into the heart of man*" (Mark vii. 19), since the impure portion of it, leaving after it what is clean, "*purging all meats*" (Mark vii. 19), separating what is pure from the impure, far from reaching the heart, and defiling the man, is discharged, like the food taken by all other animals, into the privy. None, therefore, of the unclean part of food reaches the heart, which the Jews believed, and our Redeemer supposes, to be the seat of the soul or of the will of man. Hence, food taken by a man cannot defile him.

Our Redeemer's reasoning in this verse supposes, as a certain principle, that nothing can defile a man except through the heart of man, as regards what remains in, or proceeds from the heart. Hence, as the food does not proceed from the heart, or remain in it, it cannot defile him.

18. He now explains what it is that defiles a man. "*But the things which proceed out of the mouth*," i.e., most of the things that proceed "*from the mouth*," or, "*from man*," as St. Mark expresses it, "*come forth from the heart*," i.e., from man's free will and reason, symbolized by the "*heart*," "*and those things defile a man*."

19. He elucidates the words, "*proceed out of the mouth*" (v. 18). "*For, from the heart come forth evil thoughts*." Although "*thoughts*" may not proceed to words or acts; still, they proceed from the heart and mind, and may be sinful, and may pollute the

soul. "*He who looks after a woman, to lust after her, commits adultery*" before God (c. v. 28). In this, our Redeemer refutes the error of the Jews, who imagined that mere thoughts, as such, although consented to, were not sinful. "*Murders, adulteries,*" &c. Our deeds of sin are first conceived voluntarily in the heart, before they are externally manifested in act; and it is, because they proceed from the heart, and are wilfully assented to, that they are sinful. The worst actions performed by *idiots or fools*, devoid of reason or free will, although materially wicked, would not still be imputed to them as sins.

20. "*These are the things,*" &c. This is our Redeemer's conclusion from the foregoing. "*These things come out of the mouth*" (v. 11). "*But to eat with unwashed hands,*" because such things are among those that go into the mouth (v. 11), "*doth not defile a man.*"

TEXT.

21. *And Jesus went from thence, and retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.*

22. *And behold a woman of Chanaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.*

23. *Who answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us.*

24. *And he answering, said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.*

25. *But she came and adored him, saying: Lord, help me.*

26. *Who answering, said: It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs.*

27. *But she said: Yea, Lord: for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.*

28. *Then Jesus answering, said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour.*

COMMENTARY.

21. Seeing the obstinate incredulity and ingratitude of the Jews, our Redeemer retires from the land of "*Genesar*," or from Capharnaum and the neighbouring places, into the confines of Tyre and Sidon, probably, with the view of pointing out to His Apostles, by this mode of acting, how they were, after His resurrection, to transfer the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, from the Jews, who were obstinately bent on resisting them. He also retired, probably, for the purpose of retreat and rest after His labours. Hence, we are informed by St. Mark (vii. 24), that, entering a house, He wished to remain concealed, unknown to any person. He might have wished to remain in this private way, lest, by publicly preaching and performing miracles, He might furnish the Jews with a pretext for rejecting Him, in consequence of His having held intercourse with the Gentiles; and, moreover, He would be acting in opposition to the instructions He gave His Apostles on this subject.

"*The coasts,*" that is, the country bordering on, and belonging to "*Tyre and Sidon.*" These were maritime cities of Phœnicia, to the north of Galilee, near Mount Lebanon, which bordered on Judea. Some commentators (Maldonatus and others) are of opinion, that our Redeemer did not enter the territories of the Gentiles, but, that He only came to the extreme confines of Galilee, on the borders of Phœnicia, of

which Tyre and Sidon were the principal cities. These expositors derive an argument in favour of their opinion, from the fact, that the "*woman came out*" of these parts to see Jesus. The words, however, might be explained, that while He was in these parts, she *came out of her house*, for "*she heard of Him*" (Mark vii. 25)—Franciscus Lucas.

22. "*A woman of Chanaan.*" She was a Gentile and Phœnician, as we learn from St. Mark (vii. 26). She is said to be "*of Chanaan*," one of the descendants of Chanaan, the son of Cham, and grandson of Noe. The first-born of Chanaan was Sidon, the founder of the city bearing his name. The Chanaanites were one of the seven nations, that inhabited the land of Chanaan. They inhabited the sea coast, whence they were partly expelled by Josue. A portion, however, remained. The Jews did not subdue Tyre or Sidon. The Phœnicians and Chanaanites were the same people. They were called *Chanaanites*, by the Hebrews; and Phœnicians, by the Greeks. This woman is called a "*Syro-Phœnician*," by St. Mark (vii. 26)—for she was a Syrian, as well as a Phœnician, Phœnicia being a part of Syria—to distinguish her from the Phœnicians of Lybia, in Africa; and "*a Gentile*," in the original (ἑλληνίς), *a Greek*, which is properly rendered, "*a Gentile*." For, in the New Testament, in accordance with Jewish usage, the Gentiles are called Greeks—"Judæis et Græcis debitor sum." (Rom. i.) The word, *Gentile*, does not convey that she was an idolater, but only, that she was neither of Hebrew extraction, nor, of the Jewish religion.

"*Have mercy on me.*" She says, "*on me*," to entreat Him the more earnestly, and to show that, her daughter's affliction was fully shared in, and borne by her, which was a great proof of maternal affection.

"*O Lord, thou son of David*," shows her great faith. She believed Him to be the Messiah, promised to the Jews, and to have power over devils, whom she besought Him to expel from her daughter. Hence, she says to Him, as having this power from Himself, "*Have mercy on me, O Lord.*" "*Lord, help me*" (v. 25).

23. Our Redeemer made no reply whatever, probably, for the purpose of testing her great virtue, her faith and humility; or, perhaps, He had in view, to avoid giving His enemies a pretext for accusing Him of having violated His own instructions to His Apostles, on the subject of not transferring their ministry to the Gentiles, and to show, that if He preformed a miracle in favour of this woman, He did so from a kind of moral necessity.

"*And His disciples came*," &c. From this, it would seem it was on the road this happened. St. Mark says, "*she came in and fell at His feet*," in the house. Both accounts are true. She, in the first instance, did as St. Mark describes; and, again, when He paid no heed to her, she followed them on the way, and then He heard her petition. Others say, she, in the first instance, met Him on the road, and after that, following Him into the house, obtained, by her faith and humble perseverance, the fruit of her petition.

24. Our Lord was not sent as an Apostle from His Father to the Gentiles, to favour them with His presence; but, to the Jews, according to the predictions of the Prophets. Hence, although the Redeemer of all, He was the Apostle ("*sent*"), only of the Jews, "*minister circumcisionis*" (Rom. xv. 8). He was sent by His Father personally, to the Jews only. For them alone, He was to perform His miracles, in proof of His doctrine. Had He preached, and worked miracles

indiscriminately among the Gentiles, the Jews might have some pretext for rejecting Him as the promised Messiah (Rom. xv. 8, 9); and this is the reason why He refuses working the miracle sought for in favour of the Chanaanite woman. "*But to the sheep that are lost,*" &c. (See x. 6.) It was predicted by the Prophets, that our Lord was to preach to the Jews; and hence, in order to fulfil these prophecies, He confined His preaching and miracles generally to that people (see Rom. xv. 8, 9).

25. Her faith and humility are more and more inflamed and stimulated by the repulse she met with in the first instance. Hence, coming forward and falling down, in prostrate adoration before Him, she urges her petition with still greater earnestness.

26. "*Good*" (καλον), equitable, fair, or congruous. "*To take the bread of children,*" that is, the grace of miracles, and, in general, the grace of the Gospel, embracing His own doctrine and miracles, which were promised the Jews, the "*children*" of God, the seed of Abraham, as their special nourishment—"bread"—"*and cast it to dogs.*" Such was the estimation in which the Gentiles were held by the Jews; and such the opprobrious epithet with which they were designated, on account of their idolatry and sinful practices. Our Lord, as we are informed by St. Mark (vii. 27), replied, "*Suffer the children to be filled first;*" as if holding out some hope to her, that after the children were satiated, she might then expect the fruit of her petition. Others derive a contrary inference; they say, the harsh comparison instituted between the Gentiles and dogs, was calculated to show the utter hopelessness of the case, and was employed by our Divine Lord in giving utterance, not to His own sentiments—for, He knew the Gentiles were soon to be the favoured sons of God, while the Jews were to become "*dogs*" (Philip. iii. 2; Psalm xxi. 17)—but speaking after the manner and feelings of the Jews, for the purpose of eliciting a strong proof of her great faith and humility, which no repulse, however apparently harsh and discouraging, could damp. His words come to this: Is it fair for Me who am sent specially to the Jews, the chosen children of God, to transfer My miracles, until the Jews are fully satisfied, to the Gentiles, who hold no other place than that of dogs in the family or household of God?

27. Her humble perseverance was not to be baffled or frustrated in its object. "*Yea, Lord.*" Granted, that I am but a whelp, a worthless dog; and that to such the bread of children is not to be cast, still, even in this capacity, however mean, I have a claim to be attended to.

"*For, the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from,*" &c. She did not demand abundance of bread. The miraculous cure she sought for was only "*a crumb,*" compared with the many splendid miracles performed among the Jews, whom she calls not only "*children,*" but her "*Lords,*" in the family household of her Sovereign Master. In this, she shows her great faith, which our Redeemer so strongly commends, and also her profound humility. As if she said: You call me a whelp; and so I am; nourish me, therefore, as whelps are nourished, with *a crumb* of the bread that falls from my master's table.

28. As if acknowledging Himself to be vanquished by this woman's faith and perseverance, our Redeemer at once exclaims, "*O woman, great is thy faith*"—"great," rare, excellent, in its constancy; great, in its perseverance.

"Great," in the things you believe regarding Me, and in the confidence it inspires. "*Be it done.*" He uses an imperative form in restoring his creature, as He did in the original act of creation, "*ipse mandavit et creata sunt.*"

It is worthy of remark, that in the great encomiums bestowed by our Lord in instances of singularly great faith, the objects of these encomiums were Gentiles.

"*And her daughter was cured,*" &c. From the history of the Chanaanite woman, we can clearly see how parents should have recourse to our Lord in the necessities of their children; and implore His Divine aid in their favour. We are also taught how frequently our Lord puts off hearing us in the first instance, in order to test our faith and perseverance, and thus in the end, to render His gifts more acceptable. We also see from it, the efficacy of persevering importunity in prayer; of firm, unfaltering, faith, confidence and humility. The prayer of the Chanaanite woman was accompanied with all these conditions; and so, she was heard.

TEXT.

29. *And when Jesus had passed away from thence, he came nigh the sea of Galilee: and going up into a mountain, he sat there.*

30. *And there came to him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others: and they cast them down at his feet, and he healed them:*

31. *So that the multitudes marvelled seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see: and they glorified the God of Israel.*

32. *And Jesus called together his disciples, and said: I have compassion on the multitudes, because they continue with me now three days, and have not what to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*

33. *And the disciples say unto him: Whence then should we have so many loaves in the desert, as to fill so great a multitude?*

34. *And Jesus said to them: How many loaves have you? But they said: Seven, and a few little fishes.*

35. *And he commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground.*

36. *And taking the seven loaves and the fishes, and giving thanks, He brake, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples gave to the people.*

37. *And they did all eat and had their fill. And they took up seven baskets full of what remained of the fragments.*

38. *And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside children and women.*

39. *And having dismissed the multitude, He went up into a boat, and came into the coasts of Magadan.*

COMMENTARY.

29. "*From thence,*" that is, the confines of Tyre and Sidon, where the singular faith and humility of the Chanaanite woman, as if, extorted the miracle from Him. He left, lest others from among the Gentiles would apply for the cure of their sundry diseases.

"*He came near the Sea of Galilee,*" St. Mark (vii. 31), says, that leaving the borders of Tyre, "*He came by Sidon, to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.*" How our Redeemer could have gone from Tyre to Sidon on His way to the Sea of Galilee, when He should, it would seem, on the contrary, have gone from Sidon to Tyre to the Sea of Galilee, is a subject of controversy with commentators. In the common Greek, the words, "*by Sidon,*" are omitted. They are,

however, found in the *Codex Vaticanus*, and in all the later copies. If the reading now quoted be correct, all we can say is, that our Redeemer had some good reasons for taking the circuitous northerly route by Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, of which the Evangelist makes no mention. "*Decapolis*," the country of the ten cities, some on the east, and others on the west of the Jordan. Our Redeemer passed through the midst of this district on His way to the Sea of Galilee. St. Mark (*ibidem*) states, that on His arrival, He cured a man that "*was deaf and dumb*," of which miracle no mention is here made by St. Matthew. The man was, most likely, not deaf by nature, he only *stammered* (*μογγυλαλον*), or, *had a difficulty of speech*. This is inferred from its being said, that after the string of his tongue was loosed, "*he spoke right*," in which it is implied, that he had before spoken, not *right*; but, in a stammering, *confused* way. The ceremonies employed by our Blessed Lord in the performance of this miracle, are very instructive, and teach us to venerate the ceremonies employed by the Church in the conferring of Sacraments and in her worship, after His Divine example, in opening the ears and loosing the tongue of the deaf and dumb man. (See Mark vii. 32, &c.)

"*And going up into a mountain, He sat there*," to await the people who flocked round Him, wherever He was known to be.

30. The cures of these multitudes is passed over by St. Mark, who only records the cure above alluded to. St. Matthew and St. Mark both give a full account of all that took place.

31. The people were seized with admiration, seeing the prophecy of *Isaias* (xxxv. 5), fully verified, "*Then shall be opened the eyes of the blind*," &c. "*And they glorified the God of Israel*," who sent the Messiah, promised their fathers, and in His mercy visited Israel.

32. Our Redeemer, while administering the spiritual bread of life to the multitude, is not forgetful of their temporal wants. He now, from a kind of necessity, works a miracle, to satiate the cravings and hunger of this immense multitude. He takes pity on them; for, they continue three days in His company, forgetful of their temporal wants.

33. In proposing this question, the disciples seem forgetful of the former miracle of the multiplication of bread (xiv. 17), or, it should rather be said, they were slow and tardy of belief. For, St. Mark observes, after the former miracle (vi. 52), "*they understood not concerning the loaves; for, their heart was blinded*."

34. In order to proceed, in an orderly way, so that the greatness and certainty of the miracle might be rendered still more apparent, our Redeemer asks His Apostles, how many loaves they had still remaining of those which they carried with them for their support, and His own. Having to travel and spend some time in desert places, away from the towns and cities, the Apostles were obliged to carry some provisions for such occasions. "*Seven loaves and five fishes*."

35. On the former occasion, He commanded them to sit down on *the grass*. Here it was, "*on the ground*."

36. (See xiv. 19). "*Giving thanks*," to God the Father, for the power granted to

Him of multiplying these breads in a miraculous way. This is expressed (c. xiv.), by the words, "*looking up to heaven, He blessed.*" Here, "*giving thanks,*" includes looking up to heaven, which is generally done by men, rendering thanks; and the benediction of the bread and fishes is the effect of the act of thanksgiving.

37, 38. In the former miracle, there were only *five* loaves; here, there are *seven*. In the former, 5000, a larger number, were satiated with a smaller quantity of loaves, to intimate to us, that with God, it is all the same, to satiate many or few with a greater or lesser quantity of food. In the former, there remained *twelve* baskets, corresponding with the number of Apostles; here, *seven* baskets, corresponding with the number of loaves. This difference of circumstances shows, in the clearest way, that the present miracle was quite different from the preceding.

39. He took shipping, to prevent the multitude from following Him. "*Magedan.*" Some Greek readings have, "*Magdala.*" St. Mark (viii. 10) has, "*into the parts of Dalmanutha.*" There is no substantial discrepancy, as both places were in the vicinity of the coast on which our Redeemer landed. So, both accounts are correct. In some copies of St. Mark, we have, "*Magedan,*" instead of, "*Dalmanutha.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Lord reproaches the Pharisees and Sadducees, who asked Him for some sign from heaven, with their wilful negligence and spiritual blindness in not judging of His Divine mission, from the signs already given them, although quick-witted in judging, from natural causes, of the several phenomena in nature. Hence, as they were influenced by malice and curiosity, our Redeemer refuses giving any other sign, save that of His Resurrection, already referred to (1-5). He cautions His disciples against the perverse doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and He reproves them for being so slow of understanding, with reference to His teaching on this subject (6-12). Proceeding from Bethsaida to the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi, he there promises St. Peter primacy of jurisdiction over the entire Church, in reward for his prompt and unwavering confession of faith in His Divinity (13-19). After this expression of faith in His Divinity, made with the concurrence of all the Apostles, our Lord foretells His bitter Passion, and sharply rebukes Peter, whose zeal, overleaping the bounds of prudent reserve, stimulated him to dissuade our Lord from undergoing His bitter Passion (21-23). Our Lord points out to all Christians the necessity of taking up the cross after Him, and practising self-denial, if they wish to be saved. He then points out the sovereign importance of salvation, and its irreparability, once forfeited; and this is to be decided by a just Judge, who shall come one day in majesty, of which some of those listening, &c., would in their lifetime witness a splendid specimen (24-28).

TEXT.

AND there came to him the Pharisees and Sadducees tempting: and they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

2. But he answered and said to them: When it is evening, you say: It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.

3. And in the morning: To-day there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering. You know then how to discern the face of the sky: and can you not know the signs of the times?

4. A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. And he left them and went away.

5. And when his disciples were come over the water, they had forgotten to take bread.

6. Who said to them: Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

7. But they thought within themselves, saying: Because we have taken no bread.

8. *And Jesus knowing it, said: Why do you think within yourselves, O ye of little faith, for that you have no bread?*

9. *Do you not yet understand, neither do you remember, the five loaves among five thousand men, and how many baskets you took up?*

10. *Nor the seven loaves, among four thousand men, and now many baskets you took up?*

11. *Why do you not understand that it was not concerning bread I said to you: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?*

12. *Then they understood that he said not that they should beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

COMMENTARY.

1. After arriving at Magedan, "*there came to Him the Pharisees and Sadducees tempting.*" These two sects were at deadly enmity among themselves. But, like Pilate and Herod, laying aside for a time their differences, they unite against Jesus Christ. Indeed, a melancholy experience, derived from the history of the Church from her very foundation to the present day, has shown this to be true of all heretical sects, who, although at enmity among themselves, are always sure to join in an unholy alliance whenever there is question of the interests of God's Church, or the persecution of her children. "*Tempting,*" not for the purpose of believing; but, from the wicked motive of testing His power, lessening His influence, and blackening His reputation among the people. Hence, St. Mark (viii. 11), says, "*they began to question with Him.*"

"*A sign from Heaven,*" to prove His Divine mission, and show that He was the promised Messiah, and derived His authority from Heaven, such as was given by Josue, in making the sun stand still; by Samuel, in scattering thunder; by Isaias, in bringing back the shadow; Elias, in bringing fire from heaven; Moses, in the manna that rained from above. They insinuate that all His miracles hitherto were of an humble, earthly character, and might be the effect of the occult powers of nature. Such, for instance, was the very miracle of the multiplication of bread, which He was after performing. But let Him exhibit some celestial prodigy, like the manna of Moses (John vi. 31), who gave bread from heaven to their fathers, if He wished to bring conviction home to the class of men who were placed beyond the prejudices of the vulgar. No doubt, they would find plenty of excuses for evading the force of such a miracle also; if our Redeemer were to gratify them with performing it.

2. Our Redeemer here reproaches the Pharisees, who were well versed in ascertaining the state of the weather, from certain signs, and sharp in judging of natural effects, with not learning from the signs given them in Scripture, that He fulfilled all that had been foretold regarding Him.

From experience, they learned that certain appearances in the sky at morning and evening, prognosticated certain kinds of weather, stormy or calm. It does not belong to us here to discuss or examine the natural or philosophical causes of such phenomena. Our Redeemer here merely refers to the judgments they were in the habit of forming, from certain appearances in the sky, regarding the state of the weather, by which judgment they regulated their actions, staying at home, or going abroad, as the case might be.

3. "*And can you not know the signs of the times?*" Some commentators read these words affirmatively, without an interrogation, and interpret them thus: "You know

how to discern the face of the sky, but you can not know the signs of the times," which point to My arrival, in the same way as certain natural signs indicate the state of the weather. It is from the prophecies I fulfil, and the miracles I perform, this is to be clearly inferred; for, "*the kingdom of God does not come with observation*" (Luke xvii. 20). The signs of My *second* coming shall be celestial, "*signs in the sun and in the moon,*" &c. But the signs of My *first* coming, regarding which you come to "*tempt*" Me, are the working of miracles, the fulfilment of the prophecies regarding Me—giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, &c. (Isa. xxxv. 5). Others, more probably, read the words and interpret them interrogatively, thus: You can judge of the future state of the weather from certain prognostics; and should you not judge, with still greater certainty, "*of the times,*" for the arrival of the Messiah having been accomplished, from "*the signs,*" which prove this beyond all doubt? These signs are—besides the passing of the Sceptre from Juda—the accomplishment of the seventy weeks of Daniel, His birth in Bethlehem, predicted by Micheas, &c.—the miraculous wonders He wrought in fulfilment of the oracles of the Prophets. (Matt. xi. 5, &c.) This latter reading and interpretation better accords with the words of St. Luke (xii. 56), "*Ye hypocrites, ye know . . . but how is it ye do not discern this time?*" If they are thus slow in judging of the "*signs*" of His coming, it is to their wilful negligence and blindness, and their perverse disposition to elude the force of such signs by false interpretations, this is owing. St. Jerome tells us (*in hunc locum*), that verses 2 and 3 are wanting in most copies, so that the passage ran thus: "*But He said to them,*" (v. 2), "*a wicked and adulterous,*" &c. (v. 4). They are still wanting in the *Codex Vaticanus*.

4. "*A wicked and adulterous generation,*" &c. This has reference to the Sadducees, who denied the Resurrection. The words are explained (xii. 39). These men had already abundant evidence of our Saviour's Divine mission, and sought further evidence from curiosity and malice, rather than from pure motives. Hence, our Redeemer did not gratify them; but, "*deeply sighing in spirit*" (Mark viii. 12), on account of their perversity, He declares that no such sign as that asked for shall be given to this wicked generation. (See 235.)

5. "*Were come,*" that is, were crossing "*over the water.*" For, from St. Mark (viii. 14), it appears, that what is recorded in the following verses, occurred while they were "*in the ship,*" although others, with Maldonatus, deny this, relying on the account of the passage in St. Luke (xii. 1), where it is said, the words of our Lord, in reference "*to the leaven of the Pharisees,*" was spoken in presence of a large multitude.

"*They had forgotten to take bread.*" It was usual with them when going on board, or when passing from a place where provisions might be had, to a place where they might have no opportunity of procuring them, to provide themselves with a proper *viaticum* for the occasion. Now, however, so engrossed were they with the heavenly doctrine of our Divine Redeemer, that they forgot to provide for their corporal wants. The Evangelist records this, as he wished to narrate the perplexity, which this omission to provide bread caused them, on hearing the words of our Lord about "*the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*"

6. Having in sorrow left the Pharisees and Sadducees as incurable, our Redeemer takes occasion, from their blind perversity, to instruct His disciples. "*Take heed and beware.*" The repetition of words conveying the same idea, makes the phrase more

emphatic, as if He said: be exceedingly cautious and on your guard, against "*the leaven of the Pharisees*," &c. The word, "*leaven*," as is afterwards explained (v. 12), signifies doctrine. It is taken in a bad sense here, to denote false doctrine. It is sometimes, however, taken in a good sense (xiii. 33). It here very appropriately expresses the quality of false doctrine, which pervades and infects, so as to communicate its own nature to any body of doctrine with which it may be mixed. The least admixture of error renders any system of doctrine worthy of reprobation, no matter how much truth it may otherwise contain. By "*leaven*," here is not meant *all* the doctrine of the Pharisees—for, when they sat in the chair of Moses, and taught his doctrine, they were to be heard, though, strictly speaking, the law of Moses, officially propounded by them, could hardly be called, *their doctrine* (xxiii. 2)—but, the false doctrines and useless commandments of men opposed to the commandments of God, which they ingrafted on the Divine law (xv. 3); also glosses and interpretations of the law, which made its observance altogether exterior. These might be truly termed their peculiar teachings and doctrines (xxiii. 23-29)—teachings which only had the effect of making men become proud, envious hypocrites. "*Attendite a fermento Phariseorum, quod est hypocrisis.*" (Luke xii.

"*And of the Sadducees.*" Their errors were of the most revolting kind. They denied the Resurrection (xxii. 23); the existence of spirits (Acts xxiii. 8); also the immortality of the soul (Josephus Antiq. Lib. 18, c. 2; de Bel. Jud. Lib. ii. c. 7). St. Mark (viii. 15) adds, "*and the leaven of Herod*," which in some versions, is, "*and of the Herodians.*" The Evangelist, it seems, refers to the sect of the Herodians, which existed in the days of our Redeemer. *Who* they were, *What* their tenets, *Why* called Herodians, cannot be easily ascertained (see Dixon, "Introduction to SS. Scriptures," vol. ii. p. 128).

7. They anxiously thought within themselves—St. Mark (viii. 16) tells us, they communicated these thoughts to one another—that He meant this as a reproach, on account of their forgetfulness to bring bread, as usual, for the relief of their wants in desert places, far away from towns and the habitations of men. It also filled them with uneasiness about their future wants, and caused them to fear, He might go to some place where they would have no other bread than that of the Pharisees, against which, taking His words in their literal sense, they supposed our Lord to have cautioned them. They committed a twofold fault—first, they were too anxious about bread; and, secondly, they misunderstood our Redeemer's words.

8. In virtue of His omniscience, He divined their inmost thoughts. "*Of little faith.*" Their anxiety proceeded from want of faith in His power, and confidence in His gracious providence, and fatherly care of them.

9, 10. From St. Mark (viii. 17), as well as from the words of this verse, "*Do you not yet understand?*" it would seem our Redeemer reproached His Apostles with want of knowledge and penetration. He next rebukes them for want of faith and confidence in Him; and He reminds them of the miracles He wrought, of which they seemed to lose all recollection.

11. Our Redeemer, in explaining His words regarding the leaven of the Pharisees, &c., confines Himself merely to saying, His words were not to be literally understood "*of leaven*," which is used in bread; and He leaves themselves to conjecture what His meaning was.

12. They understood Him to speak of the "*doctrine*," of these several sects. False doctrine is appropriately represented by "*leaven*." For, as a little leaven ferments the entire mass, and imparts to it, its own properties; so, false doctrine, ever so apparently trivial, would infect and destroy any system of doctrine, and would produce in the minds of men effects very similar to those which leaven produces in the leavened mass, viz., sourness and fermentation; in other words, anger, ambition, pride and hypocrisy.

How far our Redeemer's words here are consistent with His teaching, regarding the public ministerial authority of the Pharisees, as succeeding to the authority of Moses may be seen at xxiii. 2. What St. Luke (xii. 1) records, "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy*," is perfectly consistent with what is said here, because the *doctrine* of the Pharisees might be termed "*hypocrisy*," its tendency being, to inculcate the performance of mere external actions and the observance of ceremonies, for the purpose of gaining human applause, while destitute of real internal sanctity which it affected, although it did not exist, and what is this but "*hypocrisy*?"

TEXT.

13. *And Jesus came into the quarters of Casarea Philippi: and he asked his disciples, saying: Whom do men say that the Son of man is?*

14. *But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*

15. *Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am?*

16. *Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.*

17. *And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.*

18. *And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

19. *And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.*

COMMENTARY.

13. Leaving Bethsaida, "*Jesus came into the quarters* (St. Mark viii. 27, says, "*into the towns*") "*of Casarea Philippi*." It was enriched and embellished by Philip, the son of Herod, in honour of Caesar Augustus. Hence, its name. Before that, it was called *Panias*—and continued to be so called by Pagan writers—from the adjoining spring, *Panium*, the fountain head, or spring of the Jordan. It was situated at the foot of Mount Libanus, at the northern extremity of Judea. There was another Casarea in Palestine, built by Herod the Great, in honour of Augustus. This latter was situated on the Mediterranean, not far from Joppe.

"*And He asked His disciples, saying,*" &c From St. Mark and Luke we can clearly infer, that our Redeemer, when on His way to Casarea, turned aside to some place where He prayed for some time alone; and after prayer, probably, in the place where He prayed, and while resting, before He reached the end of His journey, which is the meaning of, "*in the way*" (Mark viii. 27). He proposed the following question to His disciples, "*Whom do men say that the Son of man is?*" There were various readings of these words, but the above, which is the common reading, is the best sustained. In St. Luke (ix. 18), it is, "*Whom do the people say that I am?*" This question He thought proper to put, in order to afford His Apostles an opportunity of confessing His Divinity, that thus He would confirm their faith, and they would not

be scandalized by the allusion He intended making on this occasion to His ignominious death and passion, which might prove a stumbling block to those who were not sufficiently grounded in the faith of His Divinity.

14. "*But they said: Some (say thou art) John the Baptist.*" Probably, this refers to those who were of the same opinion with Herod the Tetrarch (xiv. 2), and might have imbibed the error of the Pharisees, who held, as we are informed by Josephus, *that a just man could easily return to life*. Whether they held the Pythagorean error of transmigration of souls in general, is disputed. They thought that when prophets returned from the dead, they were endowed with extraordinary power for working miraculous wonders. Hence, Herod says, "*it is John returned from the dead, and, therefore, these wonders show forth in Him.*"

"*Other some Elias;*" because, Elias was, according to the general opinion of the Jewish nation, to precede the Messiah, the period of whose coming they believed to be at hand. This they inferred from the prophecy of Malachias (iv. 5). But these parties could never imagine, that one presenting the lowly appearance that our Redeemer did, could, notwithstanding His stupendous miracles, be the Messiah.

"*And others, Jeremias;*" whose freedom and boldness in denouncing the crimes of the Jews, of his own day, was so like the line of conduct pursued by our Redeemer in this respect.

"*Or one of the Prophets,*" the distinguished prophetic characters of old, such as Moses, Josue, Samuel. It is not likely that any among the multitude, even of those who addressed Him, as the Son of David, believed Him to be anything more than a mere man, anything more than human; and hence, the opinion of such is not quoted, their ideas of Him were mixed up with so many erroneous notions regarding Him. Moreover, such as thought Him to be the Son of God, could not be classed with the people, but with the disciples of our Lord.

15. "*But whom do you?*" &c. There is here a clear antithesis. "*You,*" who have been brought up in My school, who have enjoyed so many opportunities, favoured with so many blessings, witnessed so many of My miracles, whom I, therefore, cannot place on a level with the mere crowd, the vulgar herd, that follow Me.

"*That I am.*" He before asked about "*the Son of man*" (v. 13), in reference to "*men,*" those who see nothing more than human in Him; but here it is, "*that I am,*" as if to say, what think *you*, who know *Me* as I am, God and man.

16. "*Simon Peter,*" the former name, he bore from his birth; "*Simon Bar-Jona,*" the latter, the name promised him (John i. 32-42), and given since his call to the Apostleship (Mark iii. 14; Matt. x. 1; Luke vi. 14), expressive of his dignity, as rock and foundation of God's Church.

"*Answering, said.*" Peter, whose faith was more ardent than that of all the rest, following the impulses of his natural and supernatural fervour, at once anticipates all the rest; and, fearing lest any one should utter anything beneath the dignity of his beloved Master, he "*said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

The Greek expresses it more emphatically still, by placing the article before all the words (*ὁ Χριστός, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος*), "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" In this, Peter professes his faith in the Divinity and Humanity of our Lord. The word, "*Christ,*" contains the faith of both. He is "*the Christ*" promised of old in the Law and the Prophets, hitherto anxiously expected by all the saints, anointed Prophet, Priest, and King.

"*The Son*," not by adoption, like John the Baptist, Jeremias, &c., who are sons by adoption, with whom Peter here compares, or, rather, contrasts Him; but by nature, that only well-beloved Son, in whom He is always well pleased. "*Of the living God*," of the true God, one of whose primary attributes is, necessary self existence. "*qui solus habet immortalitatem*." (1 Tim. vi.)

"*Living*," in opposition to false gods, who, as such, that is to say, as vested with Divinity, have no existence whatever, "*omnes Dei Gentium demonia*." It also distinguishes our Redeemer from the adopted sons of God. After recounting the several opinions of the people regarding Him, Peter says: We confess Thee to be *the Christ*; Thou callest Thyself, "*the Son of man*;" we proclaim Thee as the eternal Son of God.

17. "*Blessed*." They are said to be "*blessed*" in SS. Scripture, who receive from God some singular privilege and grace, conducing to eternal life. Hence, Peter is said to be "*blessed*," because, singularly favoured by God.

"*Simon Bar-Jona*," the son of Jona. (*Bar*, in Chaldaic, means, *son*.) "*Jona*," is, probably, a contraction for "*Johanna*"—the Hebrew for *Johannes*, or John. For, Simon is said to be the "son of John" (John xxi. 15).

"*Because flesh and blood*," that is, man. No human tradition or instruction, no information on the part of any human being, no lights derived from any human source whatsoever, could ever have communicated this to you, "*but My Father who is in heaven*." It is the result of a supernatural revelation, imparted to you by My Heavenly Father.

How it is Peter is singularly "*blessed*," on this occasion, is not easily seen, since he had already, on a former occasion (John vi. 70), proclaimed our Lord's Divinity. Nathanael (John i.) did the same; why not he be equally "*blessed*?" And here, Peter would seem to have acted merely as the mouthpiece or spokesman of the twelve. For, they were all asked, "*who do you say?*" &c.; he answers for them. Why, then, should he be singularly "*blessed*" on this occasion? The reply commonly given is, that on the occasion mentioned (John vi. 70), Peter had not the same exalted faith in our Saviour's Divinity, that He gives expression to here, or that he there expressed, unasked, more than was true regarding *all* the Apostles, since our Redeemer corrects him (v. 71). But here, on this solemn occasion, being called upon by our blessed Lord to declare, what their faith in opposition to the false notions of the crowd regarding Him was, he freely and loudly proclaims Him "*the Son of the living God*." As for Nathanael and others, the common opinion regarding them is, that in proclaiming Him to be the Son of God, they did so according to the notions of the Jews regarding the Messiah, viz., that He was the adopted Son of God, but in a measure still far exceeding that of the other saints. Hence, they had not the faith of Peter, who proclaimed Him the *Natural, Eternal, Consubstantial* Son of God.

As regards the assertion, that Peter answered on behalf of the others, would it not appear from what follows, viz., the special prerogatives bestowed on him, the words addressed to himself personally, that he answered for himself principally? Otherwise, why should not our Redeemer say, "*You are all blessed, for flesh and blood . . . to you*." Why not say, "*To you all I give the keys?*" &c. When *all* were asked why did not all answer, as they did severally, when interrogated regarding the opinions of the crowd? Hence, Peter replied on his own behalf. On his own behalf, he was the first to express, with greater ardour, what, no doubt, the others, too, might have said, had not Peter anticipated them; and this is what the holy Fathers mean, who say, that Peter was the mouthpiece of the other Apostles. Moreover, strictly speaking, no one could express the opinions of others, particularly

on a point of such vital importance, unless he had the gift of searching their hearts, or, at least, without previous consultation, which did not occur here. Hence, Peter spoke for himself, and thus merited the eulogium, "*Blessed art thou.*" "*Revealed to thee;*" and, probably, his faith on the subject was, in consequence of this revelation, more perfect at the time, than that of the others. What follows refers to Peter individually, so peculiar to him, designating his pre-eminence in the government of the Church, addressed to him in so marked a manner, that it is no more applicable to the other Apostles than the name, *Peter* itself.

18. "*And I say to thee, thou art Peter.*" You, a mere man, confess and openly proclaim, under the influence of my Heavenly Father's revelation, that I am the *Natural, Eternal, Consubstantial Son of God*; I, on the other hand, who am the *Eternal Son of God*, and can, therefore, fulfil all *My* promises; say to *you*, that although a mere man, "*thou art Peter,*" or *rock*—a name long since conferred on thee for mystical reasons. And in reward for your glorious confession, I promise you that, imparting to you a share, in a subordinate degree, in My incomparable privileges, "*upon this (Peter, or) rock,*" that is, upon thee, "*I shall build My Church,*" this spiritual edifice, which is to successfully resist every hostile assault, and subsist to the end of time. I being its great architect, on thee shall it rest, as the great centre of unity, its unfailing foundation. It is clear that, "*upon this rock,*" refers to Peter, according to all the laws of grammatical construction; and this becomes still more evident, if we bear in mind, that in the Syro-Chaldaic language, in which our Redeemer spoke, the words run thus, "*thou art Cephas, and upon this Cephas I will build My Church,*" which, literally rendered, should run thus: "*thou art Peter (that is, a rock), and upon this Peter (or rock) I shall build My Church.*" But the Greek interpreter, with some detriment to the clearness of the phrase, rendered *Cephas*—which means, "*rock*"—*πετρος*, in the masculine, in the first instance, as applying to the person of Peter; and *πετρα*, in the feminine, in the second instance, as more expressive of a quality, or of the exalted dignity conferred on him by our Redeemer.

It is utterly unmeaning to refer, as is done by some, the word, "*rock,*" to either our Redeemer Himself, or to the *faith* of Peter, save in the *concrete*, which is the same as Peter himself, gifted with such great faith, and raised to high dignity on account of it; or, to the *faithful*, themselves constituting the Church, or superstructure, which could not be built on *itself*; or, to the other Apostles, since Peter is addressed individually—"thou art," &c.; "*I will give to thee,*" &c.; "*whatever thou shalt bind,*" &c.

"*I shall build.*" There is question, of course, of a spiritual building. "*My Church.*" *His* Church is the universal Church; to Him belongs not merely any one portion, but the whole Church, "*which He purchased with His own blood*" (Acts xx. 28); "*which He sanctified by the laver of water . . . and rendered glorious, not having spot or wrinkle*" (Eph. v. 26, 27).

"*And the gates of hell shall not prevail,*" &c. By "*gates,*" is meant, *strength*, or *might*. Of this, "*gates,*" were symbolical. The word has this meaning in several passages of SS. Scripture.

"*Of hell*" (*adon*, of Hades; Hebrew, *School*). By this word, some understand the sepulchre, or death, which is the gate or entrance to hell. Others, more probably, the hell of the damned, the domains of him who hath the power of death, Satan. (See Murray, de Ecclesia. vol. 1; Fascic 11, Disp. vi.) This latter is the more general interpretation of the word. But, whichever of these two meanings be the true one, matters but little, as the words, whether they refer to *death* or *hell*—and death is represented as very powerful in SS. Scripture—symbolize a hostile kingdom, *the*

great enemy, of all enemies the most powerful, the chief antagonist, ever warring implacably, but in vain, against the kingdom of Christ. So powerful, that it takes all the firmness of this kingdom, armed with the power of God, and founded on the immovable foundation which He has established, to resist it. In the Scriptures, the world, the flesh, and the devil, are exhibited as the great enemies which the Church of Christ has ever to combat.

"Shall not prevail against it." The word, "*prevail*," may be taken *passively* or *actively*. *Passively*; it means, to withstand, to successfully hold out and resist. The words would mean, in this interpretation, that all the powers of hell, all the strength of persecuting tyrants, all the blandishments of pleasures, all the errors of heretics, or whatever other means of defence Satan may employ, shall not be able to withstand the strength and assaults of the Church, or kingdom founded by Christ.

Taken *actively*, it will mean, to *overcome*. The word, "*rock*," would favour this latter interpretation, which exhibits the Church as an impregnable fortress, made for resistance and defence, rather than for aggression.

"Against it." The common interpretation of the holy Fathers and commentators, refers "*it*," to the nearest noun, which is, "*Church*." Although one must feel naturally reluctant to depart from the common interpretation, still, it seems to me far more probable, on intrinsic grounds, that the word, "*it*," which, of itself, and by grammatical construction, may refer to *Church* or *rock*, directly and immediately refers to the latter. The context seems to require that it be referred to the *primary* subject of the discourse, which is also the subject of the promised remuneration spoken of. Now, this subject is "*rock*;" whereas, "*Church*," is but a secondary, and, at best, incidental subject in the discourse (see Bouix, de Papa Tom ii., p. 173). Moreover, in the entire passage, "*and*" is a connecting link in the gradation of the several privileges, or, rather, in the several images and metaphors expressive of one and the same privilege of supreme authority conferred on Peter, in reward for his glorious confession of faith.

1. "*Thou art Peter*," or *rock*, a name already conferred on you.
2. "*AND upon this (Peter or) rock I will build My Church*."
3. "*AND the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*."
4. "*AND I will give thee the keys*," &c.
5. "*AND whatsoever thou shalt bind . . . AND whatsoever thou shalt loose*."

Then, in what precedes and follows, the words "*prevail against it*," "*and*," indicates an additional reward, or rather a new idea or image, symbolical of the same reward and exalted privilege bestowed on Peter, to whom the discourse is directed. Why not, then, refer to him in this, so as to express, that not only is he to be the rock support, but the invincible, ever enduring, conquering and unconquerable support of God's indefectible Church? It seems to me, that the repetition of "*and*," before the several prerogatives conferred on Peter, not on his own behalf, but for the enduring good of the Church, or, rather, before the several images expressive or symbolical of the one and same prerogative of supreme, enduring authority over the entire Church, greatly favours this latter interpretation. To this it may be added, that at all times the attacks of hell against God's Church were principally levelled at her (as they are at the present day) through her head; and our Lord, by directly referring to the rock of the Church which, *eo ipso*, includes the Church itself, as invincible, would wish to point out the source from which the Church derives her impregnable strength and invincibility, viz., her firm and inseparable union with her head. The meaning, however, of the passage will come to the same, whether "*it*" refers to the "*rock*," or to the "*Church*." "The rock is so strong, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; therefore, neither can they prevail against the Church built on the rock. The Church is so strong, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; therefore, neither can they prevail against the '*rock*,' on which it is built" (Murray "An. Miscel.," vol. iii. p. 29).

Peter, therefore, being Divinely appointed, as the impregnable rock on which the Church is built, possesses supreme spiritual authority, with full power to uphold, defend, govern, and consolidate the Church, as long as she exists—that is to say, to the end of time—against all her enemies. He must, therefore, be armed with all the necessary means, that is, with all legislative and executive power, in the spiritual order, to effectually accomplish this. As supreme monarch, acting as Vicar of Christ, he must be vested with all necessary power to uphold integrity of faith and purity of morals, a power extending, in Ecclesiastical matters, to *all* persons, limited only by the nature of things, and the immutable law of God. If this be not primacy of jurisdiction, it is hard to say what such primacy is. It need hardly be observed, that the interpretation of the words, “*prevail against it*,” adopted above, sets forth, in a clearer light, the proof, derived from this text, of the infallibility of the successor of St. Peter in the Apostolic See, when *addressing the universal Church*, and *defining* subjects of faith and morals; that is to say, when speaking *ex Cathedra*. The defined Faith of the Church regarding the Infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff, speaking *ex Cathedra*, could be proved satisfactorily from other undoubted and independent sources, even though this text never existed.

19. The same supreme power or jurisdiction is granted to him clearly under another symbol and image. “*And I will give to thee the keys*,” &c. “*Keys*” were regarded among all nations, ancient and modern, whenever they symbolized anything, as the symbols of power. To kings and conquerors the keys of cities were given, as a symbol of their power and authority. The tradition of the keys of any place, whether city or fortress, was equivalent to handing over the full power and authority over that place. In the SS. Scriptures we have several instances of this. (Isa. xxii. 19, &c.; Apoc. iii. 7; ix. 1, &c.; xxi. &c.) Hence, the metaphor of the keys here clearly conveys, that our Lord, on whose shoulders His Father had placed “*the key of the house of David*” (Isa. xxii. 22), had transferred to Peter the singular pre-eminence and power He Himself received, and communicated to him, as His vicar and vicegerent, the fulness of His power, over “*the kingdom of heaven*,” that is to say, the Church, or kingdom of the Messiah, a signification the words frequently bear in the Gospels, and the signification they clearly bear here. To Peter, then, it is here promised by our Divine Redeemer, that he will be constituted supreme monarch, in His own place, over His “*kingdom*,” with universal spiritual power and jurisdiction, for extending, upholding, and consolidating that kingdom. This pre-eminence was actually given to him, after our Lord’s resurrection, “*feed My lambs*,” &c., in words addressed to him alone, in presence of the other Apostles (John xxi. 15-17).

“*And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth*,” &c. This, according to some commentators, is a clearer explanation of the metaphor of “*the keys*,” showing the principal effect of their exercise. Others, with greater probability, regard this as a distinct metaphor, conveying, under a different image, the same idea of supreme authority and jurisdiction. The effect attributed in SS. Scripture to “*the keys*,” is, not to “*loose and bind*,” but to “*open and shut*.” Again, the universal term (ὅ) “*whatsoever*,” extends to more objects than can fall within the exercise of the power of “*the keys*.” The word, “*whatsoever*,” embraces, in its widest extent, all things over which the power of binding or loosing can be exercised, in the spiritual order, all *places* throughout the entire earth, all *persons*, who by baptism, are made subject to the Church, all *matters* in the spiritual order, not excepted by the nature of things, or, by the Law of God, or the Divine Constitution of the Church. In a word, it involves universal legislative, judicial and executive authority to rule, govern and uphold the entire Church, including pastors and people.

Although each of the preceding metaphors, viz., of the rock, of the keys, or binding and loosing, conveys, of itself, with undoubted clearness, that supreme spiritual jurisdiction and authority was conferred on Peter; still, our Redeemer would impress us with its vast importance, by conveying the same general idea, under different and expressive metaphors.

TEXT.

20. *Then he commanded his disciples, that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ.*

21. *From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples, that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes, and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again.*

22. *And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him, saying: Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee.*

23. *Who turning said to Peter: Go behind me, satan, thou art a scandal unto me; because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.*

COMMENTARY.

20. "*Then He commanded His disciples,*" &c. Mark (viii. 30), and Luke (ix. 21), both tell us, He *strictly* charged them, not to tell any one of this. There are several reasons, or motives, assigned for this precept of our Redeemer. Some say, He was actuated by humility, as He was on several other occasions, when He performed miracles (ix. 30). Others say, He was influenced by motives of prudence, to avoid irritating His enemies, who might be excited to such a pitch, as to anticipate the hour He Himself had marked out for His death. The most probable reason seems to be, that, although He had already abundantly proved His Divinity by miracles, and His own positive assertions (John v., &c.), still, the time for openly divulging and proclaiming this was reserved for the period after His resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, when the Apostles, no longer liable to be scandalized by His Passion, would be able to preach and defend it, and the people sufficiently strengthened in faith to receive it. It may be, too, that He feared, if once the people embraced the faith in His Divinity, the shock resulting from His death would be too great for them at this early stage of their faith, and, if it ended in apostasy, it would render their return more difficult. This is borne out by His reference to His death and Passion, in the following verse. Hence, we find that the great argument in proof of His Divinity everywhere in SS. Scripture, is derived from His resurrection. The injunction given here is by no means opposed to the commission heretofore given to the Apostles to preach in Judea, as they were only to "*preach penance*" (Mark vi. 12), and the near approach "*of the kingdom of heaven;*" but they were by no means commissioned at the time to preach His Divinity. And although He says (x. 33), He would deny him before His Father in heaven, who would "*deny Him before men,*" this, however, has reference to the time after His resurrection, when His Divinity would be openly proclaimed.

No doubt, our Lord had Himself, during life, declared His own Divinity (John v., &c.) This, however, He did more or less obscurely; and He knew *when* and *how* He Himself might do so, without interfering with the decrees of His providence, while issuing a prohibition to others on the subject.

21. "*From that time,*" that is, from the time of the glorious confession of His Divinity, made by Peter, in the presence. and with the concurrence, of the other

Apostles, "*Jesus began to show to* (St. Mark viii. 31, has, '*to teach*') *His disciples . . . must go to Jerusalem,*" as preordained by His Father, and predicted by the Prophets, "*and suffer many things from* (St. Mark adds, '*and be rejected by*') *the ancients,*" &c.

"*The ancients,*" refer to the members of the Great Sanhedrim, called (Luke xxii. 66). *πρεσβυτεριον*, who enjoyed supreme authority in the Jewish Republic—"and Scribes," under whom are also included the Pharisees—"and be put to death," &c. Our Redeemer did not treat "*openly*" (Mark viii. 32), in presence of His Apostles, of His Passion, before they made a public confession of His Divinity, lest they might be scandalized thereby, so as to desert Him altogether. But, after this public confession of their faith in His Divinity, no such consequences were to be apprehended. And He now forewarns them, that He freely submitted to death, for man's redemption; thus to prepare them for it, when it should happen (John xvi. 1). He, probably, also had in view, by referring to His Passion, to prepare them—as may be inferred from verse 24—for the sufferings in store for them, after the example of His own unjust sufferings.

22. The vehement ardour of Peter's affection for his Divine Master overleaping the bounds of prudent reserve on this occasion, could not endure, that He whom he was after proclaiming to be the Son of the Living God, should submit to such ignominious treatment from the Jews. Hence, "*taking Him*" aside, he began to remonstrate with Him, in the warmth of his ardent affection.

"*Far be it from Thee.*" This expresses the precise and ordinary meaning of the idiomatic phrase (*ἵναός σου*, "*propitius tibi,*" to which, St. Jerome adds, "*sis,*" "*spare Thyself, O Lord.*" Others add, "*sit Deus; propitius tibi sit Deus*"—*May God avert such an evil*, and cause matters to take a more favourable turn. The phrase is sometimes used in the Old Testament, by the Septuagint; and it has the meaning given it here by the Vulgate, "*absit a te,*" &c.—*May God forbid.*

23. Our Lord, turning round to Peter, who was either behind Him, or by His side, when He uttered the foregoing words (St. Mark adds, viii. 33, "*and seeing His disciples,*" in whose presence Peter spoke), "*said to Peter*" (St. Mark, "*threatened Peter*"), redargued him, in the presence of all—"Go behind Me, Satan; thou art a scandal to Me." St. Hilary, understanding "*Satan*," of the devil, who is the chief Satan, that is to say, adversary of the human race, says, the first words, "*Go behind Me,*" were alone addressed to Peter, and the following words, "*Satan, thou art a scandal,*" &c., were addressed to the devil, who tempts us, and suggests wicked actions. But these latter words, too, are commonly referred to Peter, who had been a *Satan*, which means, *adversary*, on this occasion, however, innocently, and unintentionally, opposing the will of God. "*Go behind Me,*" begone from Me, thou adversary, "*thou art a scandal to Me,*" so far as thou art concerned, endeavouring to induce Me to commit sin, by resisting the will of God, and to forego the great work of Redemption, by avoiding suffering and death. Others understand, "*Go behind Me,*" thus: rather follow My counsels and instructions, than anticipate them, by gratuitously tendering advice. But the foregoing is more probable, as our Redeemer manifestly rebukes Peter. It is remarked by some expositors, that the word, "*Satan*," frequently signifies (as in 2 Kings xix. 22), evil counsellor; and so, perhaps, it may signify the same here, as if He said: under the appearance of attachment, thou givest Me the worst counsel. This sudden change in our Redeemer, now calling Peter, "*Satan*," after the eulogium bestowed on him, should cause no surprise, as the primacy was not given, but promised to Peter at this time "*I will build; I will give,*" &c.

"*Because thou savourest not,*" &c. In these words is assigned the reason why Peter is become a scandal, or occasion of sin, however unconsciously, by placing an obstacle to the glory of God, because he was actuated by human feelings, which shrink from death and ignominy, rather than by feelings inspired by God, which would dictate to us to undergo any amount of evil, sooner than commit sin, or resist the will of God, however opposed to our own corrupt passions.

From this may be seen the obligation we are under, of trampling under foot all human feelings and natural affections, when duty to God, or a call of a higher order, demands such a sacrifice. St. Jerome observes, with reference to Peter's primacy, as apparently affected by this rebuke, that the primacy was not yet actually conferred. Moreover, ecclesiastical preferment does not destroy the passions.

TEXT.

24. *Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

25. *For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.*

26. *For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?*

27. *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his Angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works.*

28. *Amen I say to you, there are some of them that stand here, that shall not taste death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

COMMENTARY.

24. "*Then Jesus said,*" &c. St. Mark (viii. 34) says, "*And calling the multitude together with His disciples, He said,*" &c. St. Luke (ix. 23) "*and He said to all.*" Most likely, that, in the presence of the entire multitude, whose salvation was involved in the following words, He addressed Himself principally to His disciples. "*If any man will come after Me,*" "*si quis vult post me venire,*" which it is perfectly free for anyone to do. "*Come after Me,*" to become a true follower, and share in the blessings of the Christian state. "*Let him deny himself,*" which some interpret to mean, to put aside the old man, and put on the new. But from the following, it is clear the words regard self-abnegation, mortification, trampling under foot all carnal affections, all regard for the goods, pleasures and enjoyments of this life. The meaning of denying oneself can be easily understood from the meaning ordinarily attached to *denying some one else*, which evidently means, to undervalue him, to despise him, to value his life as nothing. Hence, "*to deny oneself,*" means, to hold oneself in little or no estimation, to be prepared to sacrifice life (v. 25), to resist the suggestions of self-love, to follow the Divine will in all things, no matter how opposed to our own inclinations. Hence, as *self-love* wishes for honours, pleasures, a long and easy life; so, *self-denial* involves the resisting of our natural inclinations in such matters. "*To deny oneself*" is, to deny that he knows himself, and is prepared to bear, and undertake sufferings, as if they were befalling some one else, whom he knows not, and with whom he has no sympathy in his sufferings; and even, in our good works, that we should seek the good-will and pleasure of God, rather than our own advantage.

"*And take up his cross.*" St. Luke adds (ix. 23) "*daily,*" to show that each one must be prepared to bear his cross perseveringly, at all times, unto the end. The

words, "*take up*," convey, that we should, with cheerful alacrity, bear whatever crosses it may please God to send us, whether they come directly and immediately from His bountiful hands, or from men: in a word, in whatever shape, or form, He may be pleased to send them.

"*And follow Me*." These words are allusive to the cross, which our Redeemer was afterwards to carry on His shoulders for our sake. They hardly add anything to the sense of the preceding. They merely fill up the sentence thus, "*If any man will come after Me*," which is the same as, "*If any man will follow Me*;" and it is by denying himself, cheerfully taking up his cross, that one follows Christ.

25. Having pointed out in the preceding, the duty of self-denial, our Redeemer now refers to the motives, which should stimulate to the performance, with cheerful hearts, of this painful duty, from which corrupt nature so strongly recoils. The principal motive is founded on the necessity of our doing so, in order to secure our eternal salvation, and the great rewards attached to self-denial. "*Save his life*," his bodily life; "*shall lose*," his spiritual and everlasting life, whenever the occasion arises demanding the sacrifice of life, and every temporal advantage in the cause of God, and in defence of His law. Such occasions do sometimes arise; and, then, after the example of many of the saints, as well of the Old Testament as of the New, we must be prepared to sacrifice everything for God and eternal life. The reward attached to the sacrifice of one's temporal life for God, is to gain eternal life (see x. 38, 39). "*He that shall lose his life*." The carrying of one's cross, inculcated in the preceding verse, sometimes involves the sacrifice of life. The connecting link between this and the preceding verse, may be supplied thus (v. 24). "*If any man, &c.*" (and, indeed, it is right that each one should take up his cross and follow Me). "*For he that shall save*," &c. (v. 25.) The particle, "*for*," is a proof of the implied proposition just referred to.

26. "*For what doth it profit*," &c. The idea is borrowed from the condition of a man whose life is forfeited, either in judgment, or from being captured in war. Such a man can derive no pleasure, once he loses his life, from the acquisition of all earthly advantages. These are then of no avail to him; and all the wealth and power of this world cannot bring back human life once lost. But, while alluding to the opinions prevailing among men, regarding the value of human life, above every other earthly possession, and its irreparability once forfeited, our Redeemer chiefly considers the eternal loss of the soul, which being once condemned, once lost, every other gain is of no avail; every acquisition for which this irreparable misfortune is incurred is but loss. "*Or what exchange*," &c., refers to a soul once condemned, once lost: no redeeming, no purchasing it back. Before condemnation, it is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and by good works, "*peccata tua elemosynis redime*," &c. (Daniel iv. 24.) But, after it is condemned, no redeeming it, "*frater non redimit, non redimet homo*," &c. (Psa. xlviii.) The connexion of this with the preceding may be seen, by supplying the following proposition, which is, as it were, a conclusion from the foregoing (*wherefore, in order to save our soul for ever, it is better to sacrifice our life for Christ's sake*). And then, in this verse is shown the reasonableness of such sacrifice, considering the inestimable and eternal importance of the interests involved in the loss, or gain, of one's soul; and the utter worthlessness of everything else in comparison. Did our Redeemer ever utter anything so full of awful import for us all, or so pregnant with matter for such serious and continual reflection, as is conveyed in this adorable, but neglected maxim, "*What*

doth it profit?" &c. In order to see more clearly the import of this sacred truth, the consideration of which sent thousands from the world into cloisters, peopled the desert with saints, stimulated the heroism of martyrs to embrace torments and death, made kings and queens descend from their thrones, and embrace the rigours of a penitential life, let us consider, separately, its two parts—first, one gains the entire world; secondly, after that, he loses his soul. Let us suppose a man to enjoy, for the longest term of human existence—which, be it ever so prolonged, compared with eternity, is but a mere point—all the honours, riches, pleasures, of which human nature is capable, and this, without the slightest alloy of bitterness, or discomfort, of any kind, *he gains the whole world*. Secondly, let us suppose that, *he loses his soul*; he is damned now for eternity, and buried in hell. Of what avail are all his past enjoyments, unless it be, from the remembrance of them, to torture him still more? His enjoyment is now past and gone; it lasted but for a moment, while he had "gained the entire world." Now, he is plunged for ever in a furnace of fire and brimstone, enkindled by the wrath of an angry God, where "the smoke of his torments shall ascend for ever and ever; where his worm shall never die, and his fire shall never be extinguished; where his fall shall be without honour, and he shall be a reproach among the dead." Of what avail were his purple, and fine linen, and hearty cheer to Dives, when he begged of Lazarus for a drop of cold water to cool his tongue tormented in the flames? Should we not constantly pray to God, for the grace ever to keep in mind the nothingness of all passing empty enjoyments, and the never-ending tortures, to which such enjoyments may consign us? We should constantly, and above all, in the hour of temptation, think on the import of these two words, EVER, NEVER. EVER to continue; NEVER to end.

27. "*The Son of man*,"—meaning Himself, "*shall come in the glory of His Father*," which is the same as the glory of Himself, the Son. Hence, St. Luke (ix. 26) has, "*when He shall come in His majesty, and that of His Father, and of the holy Angels*."

"*With His Angels*," that is, the Angels of the Son of man, who are, no doubt, the Angels of His Father, also, as "*the glory of the Father*," is common to Him with the Son.

"*And then He shall render to every one*," &c., rewards or punishments, justly and impartially, as he may deserve, "*according to his works*." The words of this verse are added, to show, that the loss or salvation of one's soul, is to be decided by a Judge, who will not be corrupted or intimidated into saving or releasing any one, whose works will not deserve it. His sentence is supreme, eternal, irreversible. Here, too, is conveyed an argument of the necessity of good works. "*Shall render to every one according to his works*," according as his works deserved, whether they were good or evil.

28. Having said in the foregoing, that, the Son of man was to come in majesty, accompanied by the holy Angels, a thing calculated to inspire His Apostles with great courage and intrepidity in preaching the humility of the cross, He now corroborates His assertion, by telling them that, although His coming in majesty might be supposed to be very distant, and, consequently, less apt to produce a due impression, even in this life, some among them would be favoured with a view of His glorious majesty. What this refers to is disputed. Some commentators understand it of our Lord's glorious Ascension, when the Apostles saw Him ascend to heaven in glory. Hence, He says, "*some of those present*;" because, the crowd who

were present, did not witness His ascension. Others understand it, of His glory in His Church, when after His resurrection, ascension, and the sending down of the Holy Ghost, His Gospel was to be wonderfully propagated and confirmed by miracles. Others, with St. Leo the Great (*Sermo. de Transfig.*)—and this is the more common opinion—understand it of the Transfiguration, which some of those present, Peter, James, and John had witnessed. This was a splendid figure, a remarkable type and manifestation of Christ's glorious coming to Judgment. This interpretation derives great probability, from the fact of those Evangelists recording the history of our Lord's Transfiguration, immediately in connexion with the words of this verse; thus pointing to it, as their fulfilment.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, is given an account of our Lord's glorious Transfiguration on Mount Thabor, of which Peter, James, and John, were chosen to be witnesses (1-8). After cautioning these privileged Apostles against divulging this glorious event till after His resurrection, He, in reply to their question, suggested by their seeing Elias, as well as Moses with Him, distinguishes between His first and second coming. The former has its Elias, too, viz., John the Baptist, whose ministry, already discharged, in reference to our Lord's first coming, was perfectly similar to that which Elias the Thesbite, is to discharge when he precedes His second and glorious coming (9-13). On reaching the rest of the Apostles and the multitude on the following day, after He came down from the mountain, He found they were unable to cure a lunatic, possessed by a devil of more than ordinary strength. Our Lord cures him, and assigns the reason of the failure of the Apostles, viz., want of the requisite faith, and their omitting to have recourse to prayer and fasting, which are necessary, in order to expel certain kinds of demons (14-20). He again predicts His Passion and Resurrection (21-22). On the requisition of the tax-gatherers, He commissions Peter to pay for both of them, having miraculously provided him with the means of doing so. He instructs him to proceed to the sea, and to take the required sum out of the first fish that came to hand.

TEXT.

AND after six days Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart:

2. And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow.

3. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him.

4. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

5. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.

6. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid.

7. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them: Arise, and fear not.

8. And they lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus.

9. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And after six days.*" St. Mark reckons the same number (ix. 1); St. Luke (ix. 28) says, "*about eight days after these words.*" Both Evangelists are thus reconciled, if reconciled they need be; St. Matthew, in his narrative, does not include the day on which the preceding words were spoken, nor the last day on which the

occurrence he is about narrating took place. Whereas, St. Luke includes not only the six intermediate days referred to by St. Matthew, but also two partial days besides, viz., the first and last. However, in any case, there is no contradiction; for, St. Luke says, "*about eight days,*" not mentioning the precise number.

"*Taketh unto Him Peter, James, and John,*" whom, as His most attached and confidential friends, and most highly favoured among the twelve, He frequently admitted to more familiar intercourse—Peter, the head of the Apostolic College; James, the greater, put to death by Herod, and the first to seal his testimony with his blood; and John, the beloved disciple, who was to outlive all the rest. These three He took with Him as the number of witnesses required for legal proof, according to the Jewish law, "*in ore duorum vel trium testium stet omne verbum,*" and also to correspond with the threefold witnesses on earth, "*tres sunt qui testimonium dant in terra,*" as the Heavenly Father, Moses, and Elias, corresponded with the three witnesses in heaven, "*tres sunt qui testimonium dant in celo,*" &c. He confined the manifestation of His glory to these three; because, He desired that the glory of His Transfiguration should not be divulged till after His resurrection.

"*Into a high mountain apart.*" This is commonly supposed to be Mount Thabor, situated in the centre of Galilee, not far from Nazareth. It is in favour of this opinion, that this event would seem to have occurred in Galilee (v. 21), in the centre of which Thabor is situated. Others say, it was Mount Libanus. This opinion derives some probability from the fact, that it was at Casarea Philippi, situated at the foot of Mount Libanus, our Redeemer conferred the Primacy on St. Peter; and it would not seem He departed as yet from that district. St. Luke says, He ascended the mountain (ix. 28) "*to pray,*" which was quite in accordance with His custom, and that it was "*whilst He prayed*" (v. 29) His Transfiguration took place.

2. "*And He was transfigured before them.*" This word here does not imply any change of substance, but only a change in His *external appearance*. He did not assume an arial spiritual body, but only changed the appearance of, and added brightness to, the body He really had. This is clearly conveyed by St. Luke, "*the appearance of His countenance was altered,*" &c. (ix. 29); and St. Matthew here explains it, "*His face did shine as the sun: and His garments,*" &c. He superadded splendour and glory to His former appearance, the substance remaining the same. He exhibited that glory with which He shall appear in His heavenly kingdom, and when He shall come one day to judge the world. He did not show His Divinity as He shows Himself to the saints in heaven. This, mortal eyes could not endure. He only showed the external glory of His body, which represented, in a certain way, the glory of the Divine Majesty.

"*And His face,* over which external splendour was diffused. Most probably, this extended to His entire body. "*Did shine as the sun;*" in this way was the gift of *clarity*, arising from the glory of the Divinity and the beatitude of the soul of Christ, shown to the Apostles. The other gifts of *impossibility*, *agility*, *spirituality*, were not exhibited. And, although from the moment of His Incarnation, these gifts of a glorified body, were due to the body of Christ, owing to its union with the Divinity; still, by Divine dispensation, and by a continuous miracle, they were concealed; their manifestation was repressed in His body, and prevented from taking effect. Even this gift of *clarity* showed itself only in a passing way, for the present occasion, but not to be perpetually manifested, as it is now manifested, in His glorified state; and shall be in the glorified bodies of the just after the General Resurrection. It was by a continuous miracle and Divine dispensation, that the body of our Lord did not exhibit the qualities of glorification from His Incarnation; and that He enjoyed the beatitude of the

soul without showing itself in the glory of His body; and it was equally a miracle, that it was gifted with clarity only in a transient way, not manifested as a perpetual gift. Others say, our Lord's glorious Transfiguration, and the passing manifestation of the gift of clarity, far from being a miracle—for, this clarity naturally arose from the beatified soul of Christ—was rather a cessation of the perpetual miracle by which were repressed the qualities of glorification.

"*And His garments became white as snow.*" Most of the Greek readings have, "*white as light.*" But, the Vulgate reading is the more probable, and the comparison more natural. Moreover, all copies of St. Mark (ix. 2) have, "*exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can make white.*" Whether this snowy whiteness and shining brightness were so really impressed on the garments of our Lord, that they assumed these qualities, really and supernaturally on the occasion; and then after the Transfiguration, reassumed their former colour; or, were merely reflected on the garments from the glorified and bright Body of our Redeemer, reflecting its brightness on everything around it, is not easily determined, and forms the subject of dispute among commentators.

There can be no question whatever of the reality of this glorious Transfiguration, no grounds for regarding it as an imaginary scene. For, although the Apostles were before, "*heavy with sleep*" (Luke ix. 32), it was after awaking, they were favoured with the sight of His glory.

Our Redeemer's object in this glorious manifestation would seem to be, by exhibiting His glory, and by adducing the testimony of Moses and Elias, to prepare His disciples for the scandal of the cross, and to animate them to undergo torments and death, by the prospects of the glory which awaited them in the Resurrection, similar to that witnessed by them on this occasion. The difference between the glory of our Redeemer and that of Moses is, that the glorious effulgence was imparted to Moses from *without*, from his converse with God; it was, moreover, confined to His face, the effulgence of which, owing to its being veiled, was concealed; whereas, that of our Redeemer was from *within*, from the glory of the Divinity and the beatitude of His soul, which, by a kind of continuous miracle, was kept from imparting the properties of glorification to His body. And, moreover, it extended to the entire body, to the entire sacred person, of our Redeemer.

3. "*And behold,*" &c. "*And,*" denotes, that immediately on His being transfigured, they saw "*Moses and Elias talking with Him.*" St. Luke (ix. 32) says, they "*stood with Him.*" Hence, it was in a standing posture, and not while elevated from the earth, this Transfiguration took place. St. Luke (ix. 31) tells us, the subject on which they were speaking was, concerning "*His death which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem.*" Our Redeemer wished to have Moses and Elias as witnesses of His Transfiguration; the former, the promulgator and representative of the Law; the latter, the representative of all the Prophets, of whom he was the greatest; to show, that far from being opposed to the Law and the Prophets, as the Jews calumniously charged Him, the Law and the Prophets bore testimony to Him, and to His death, the great source of scandal to His followers, about which they were conversing. He, moreover, wished to show, He was the Lord of Moses and all the Prophets; and not himself either Elias or any other of the Prophets, as the multitude falsely imagined. St. Luke says, "*Moses and Elias appeared in majesty.*" Our Lord, by thus wishing that His attendants on this glorious occasion should be robed like Himself, in glorious apparel, meant to show, that He will one day communicate His glory to His chosen servants in heaven. The presence of these glorified witnesses would serve to heighten His glory; and

their testimony would add still greater force to His words in the minds of His Apostles.

“*Talking with Him.*” The subject of their conversation, as we are informed by St. Luke (ix. 31), regarded His “*decease, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem.*” The Greek word (εξοδος) shows, there is question of His exit or departure out of this world, which is rendered “*excessum ejus,*” by the Vulgate. It regards His future Passion. Some spiritual writers dwell on the words, “*excessum ejus,*” to point out the excessive love for man manifested by our Blessed Lord in His Passion and unparalleled sufferings. This is, no doubt, a pious and edifying exposition, and is included in the words; but the other, as the Greek clearly shows, is the literal meaning.

St. Luke informs us, that whilst our Redeemer was praying, Peter and his companions, “*were heavy with sleep.*” While they were thus asleep, it would seem our Redeemer was transfigured; and awaking, they saw Him in this state of majesty, and Moses and Elias speaking with Him regarding His future Passion. It was not *before* they fell asleep, but *after* awaking, they witnessed His Transfiguration, as St. Luke informs us. From this, it is inferred by some, that the Transfiguration occurred in the night time. In corroboration of this it is said (Luke ix. 37), that our Redeemer came down from the mountain on the following day. Others, with St. Chrysostom, say, it took place in the day time. The fact, that a bright cloud overshadowed them, which most likely occurred in the day, favours this opinion, although this might occur on a calm, bright night also.

4. “*Then Peter, answering, said.*” “*Answering,*” by a Hebrew idiom, signifies, to commence speaking, without supposing any previous question asked. “*Then.*” St. Luke tells us, that St. Peter spoke when Moses and Elias were about to depart. Then Peter, transported with joy and almost inebriated with delight, mingled at the same time, with a kind of fear, or rather reverential awe, at the presence of such an unusual exhibition of glory—“*For, they were struck with fear*” (Mark ix. 5)—anxious that this felicity should be perpetual and unalterable, exclaimed, “*Lord, it is good (καλον, delightful, very pleasing) for us to be here.*” Therefore, do not permit Moses and Elias to depart. “*If Thou wilt*”—if Thou allow it, with your permission—“*let us make here three tabernacles,*” i.e., three tents, composed of branches of trees, such as were hastily raised, by travellers, for temporary purposes, and such as were raised on the Feast of Tabernacles. St. Peter wished to raise these as places where our Lord, Moses, and Elias might dwell. St. Mark (ix. 5), says, “*he knew not what he said,*” or, as the Greek has it, “*he knew not what to say;*” and St. Luke (ix. 34), “*not knowing what he said.*” Like the sons of Zebedee, who knew not the consequences nor conditions of what they asked, “*nescitis quid petatis.*” Peter spoke inconsiderately, not actually attending to the import of his words, nor how inconsistent and irreconcilable what he desired was, with what he saw and witnessed. Our Redeemer had sharply rebuked him, for trying to dissuade Him from suffering death. He heard two glorious witnesses speaking of His future death, in Jerusalem; and yet, Peter tries to detain them on the mountain, and leave the work of redemption unaccomplished. Moreover, it showed inconsiderateness in Peter, to imagine that glorified saints needed tents to protect them. It was thoughtless in him, to wish to have that glory confined to a few, on the mountain, which was destined for countless numbers, by the sovereign liberality of God; and to prefer the glimpse of glory, which He saw emanating from the glorified humanity and divinity of Jesus, to that effulgent, overwhelming, and dazzling glory, which from the sight of the Divinity, “*face to face,*” shall be exhibited to the saints for all eternity. “*Satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua*” (Psa. xvi. 15).

5. While Peter was speaking thus incoherently, the Heavenly Father interrupted his discourse. "*Behold*"—to call attention to it as a matter of wonder—"a bright cloud overshadowed them," that is, enveloped them, diffusing itself around our Redeemer, Moses, Elias, and the Apostles who were near to where our Redeemer was conversing with Moses and Elias. "*A bright cloud.*" The Almighty is said, frequently in Scripture, to display His Majesty in a cloud (Exodus xvi. 10; xix. 9; xxiv. 15). Hence, the Psalmist says, "*qui ponis nubem ascensum tuum,*" &c. (Psa. ciii.) This cloud, which was an indication of the Divine presence, a visible type of the "*excellent glory,*" as St. Peter terms it (2 Ep. i. 17), showed that our Redeemer needed no tabernacle, made with hands. It served to temper the brightness of the majesty which struck the Apostles with fear. By it, God partly fulfilled the desires of Peter, by showing, He was Himself the pavilion, under whose shade the blessed shall repose for ever; and by it, He was pleased to sanction the public confession of Peter, regarding the Divinity of His eternal Son, by such a public and explicit declaration, and by a command to others, to hear Him. It is said to be a *bright cloud*, while that in which He appeared, when giving the Law to Moses, was a "*very thick one*" (Exod. xix. 16), to show the difference between the New Law—the covenant of love—and the Old—the covenant of terror. St. Luke (ix. 34), says, "*they were afraid, when they entered the cloud.*" Who entered the cloud is disputed. The most common opinion is, that all entered the cloud, and that the cloud became more dense around Moses and Elias. Seeing them, as if vanishing from their sight, the disciples feared much. The very appearance of the cloud, together with the voice, which immediately after issued from it, was calculated to terrify them. Others say, the cloud enveloped only Moses and Elias, when they were on the point of departing. This bright cloud indicated the presence of the Divine Majesty.

"*And, behold,*" as a thing still more strange and wonderful, "*a voice out of the cloud.*" Not only were the eyes of the Apostles favoured with the most convincing proof of the Divinity of our Blessed Lord, but through the organ of hearing, a most conclusive proof was afforded them. "*This is My beloved Son,*" &c. These words are the same in the Greek, as those uttered on the occasion of our Blessed Lord's baptism. The article is prefixed to "*Son*" (ὁ υἱός), and to "*beloved*" (ὁ ἀγαπητός), to show that He was His natural, only begotten Son, to distinguish Him from His adopted sons, who are many in number, angels and men. The words, literally rendered from the Greek, would run thus: *hic est ille filius meus, ille dilectus*—this is the Son of mine, the beloved. The word "*beloved*" (ἀγαπητός), is frequently used for (μονογενής), *only-begotten*, because an only-begotten son is singularly beloved. Thus it is used in Genesis (xxii. 2). The Septuagint interpreters render the Hebrew word, *יְהוָה* and *מוֹנֹגֶנֶס* (Jer. vi. 26, &c.; Amos viii. 10, &c.), and it is used in this sense by Pagan authors also. Homer (Il. vi. 401); Hesiod, referred to by Pollux (Lib. iii. c. 2). The word, *ἀγαπητός*, used in connexion with υἱός, is, in every part of the New Testament, used to designate the eternal Son of God, and used to distinguish Him from those, who are sons by the several titles of creation, redemption, adoption, viz., men and angels.

"*In whom I am well pleased.*" The beloved object of My eternal complacency and love, "*in whom,*" and on account of whom, created objects please Me; "*in whom*" I am reconciled to a sinful world; who, alone, singularly pleases Me, and in whom nothing else displeases Me. The Aorist form (εὐδοκῆσα), conveys the idea of continuous pleasure, past, present, and future. These words point to our Lord, as the reconciler of God with a sinful world.

"*Hear ye Him.*" St. Chrysostom observes, that it was only after the departure

of Moses and Elias (Luke ix. 36), this voice was heard, that it might appear beyond all cavil or doubt, that it was to Christ, and Him only, the words referred. "*Hear ye Him*"—that is, believe in Him, obey His precepts, embrace His law, no longer hear Moses and the Prophets. They have discharged the duty of bearing witness to Him, the Divine Legate. He is now come, the Legislator of the New Law. Their office has now ceased. Their departure need not be regretted. He, alone, is sufficient for you. By obeying Him, you will merit and secure, for yourselves, a share in the heavenly glory, a glimpse of which has been exhibited to you on the mountain. The words, "*Hear ye Him*," are, probably, allusive to the prophecy of Moses, regarding Christ (Deut. xviii. 15), "*A Prophet of thy nation . . . Him thou shalt hear*" (see iii. 17).

6. "*And the disciples hearing*," the terrible voice of God, which some of the holy Fathers say, resembled loud peals of thunder, "*Vox Domini in virtute. Vox Domini in magnificentia.*" (Psa. xxviii.)

"*Fell upon their face*," probably, for the purpose of adoring the Divine Majesty, and of imploring Him to spare them. "*And (that is, 'for'), they were very much afraid.*" For, "*what is all flesh, that it should hear the voice of the living God?*" (Deut. v. 26.) As they were seized with fear on beholding the glory of the Transfiguration, and on entering into the cloud, so they were terrified still more on hearing the tremendous voice of God. "Human weakness could not bear such refulgent beams of glory, and trembling in every limb, they fell prostrate on the ground" (St. Jerome). It may be, they feared that Moses, on departing, would send forth from the clouds, thunder and lightning, as happened at the giving of the Law (Exod. xix. 16), and that Elias would send forth fires from the clouds as formerly (4 Kings i. 10). The Apostles, however, were not so terrified, as not to clearly perceive what occurred (2 Peter i. 18).

7. The heavenly benignity of our Redeemer, raises them up. With a gentle touch He dispels the fear with which the thundering voice and majesty of God had prostrated them to the earth. As Mediator, He interposes between the tremendous majesty of God and human infirmity. "*Arise, and fear not*," intimating to them that this was the voice, not of an angry God, but of a Father, who meant to confirm them in the faith, and to point out the glory in store for His adopted sons, destined to be co-heirs of His well-beloved Son, to whom they were hereafter to bear testimony.

8. Moses and Elias had disappeared, so had the cloud, and Jesus Himself had laid aside the glory which had dazzled them. He, alone, was visible, in His former humble state of mortality. This shows that it was to Him, and to Him only, the voice of His Father was addressed. The disappearance of Moses and Elias pointed out the temporary and transient glory of the Law and the Prophets, and showed that the Gospel alone was permanent, and destined to continue to the end of ages. The history of the Transfiguration, although differently narrated by the Evangelists, may be thus briefly summed up. While our Redeemer prayed on the mountain, the Apostles, probably, tired by the ascent, and owing to the prolonged prayer, fell asleep, during which sleep our Lord was transfigured. Next, Moses and Elias came, and discoursed with our Redeemer, regarding His death in Jerusalem. The Apostles, roused from sleep by this conversation, and by the glory which surrounded them, saw our Lord thus transfigured, and heard Moses and Elias conversing with Him. When these gave signs of

departing, Peter, overwhelmed with joy, wished to detain them, and to construct three tabernacles. Next, came the cloud, enveloping Moses and Elias, and the voice, "*hic est filius,*" &c., which terrified the Apostles, and cast them on the ground. Afterwards, comforted by our Redeemer, they rose up, and saw only our Lord, Moses having returned to Limbo, and Elias to where he is sojourning, till the Day of Judgment.

9. "*Tell the vision,*" that is, what they had been after witnessing, the glory of the Transfiguration, "*to no one,*" including, probably, their fellow Apostles, and all others, "*until the Son of man be risen again,*" &c. St. Luke says (ix. 36), "*they told no man in those days any of these things which they had seen.*" The time subsequent to the Resurrection was deemed to be the only fit time for divulging this vision. Several conjectural reasons are assigned for this. Among the rest, it might be, our Redeemer feared, as regarded the other Apostles, that they might be saddened at their not being favoured with this vision, as well as Peter, James, and John; and, as regards the people, He might have feared, they would regard the event as incredible, and seeing afterwards His weakness in His Passion, those who would be induced to believe in Him, might altogether abandon the faith, and thus it would be more difficult to bring them back again. It was only after His resurrection; it was only after He displayed, not only his omniscience, in its prediction, with all its circumstances, but also His Divine power displayed in His own resuscitation—the great proof of His Divinity furnished everywhere in the New Testament—that this vision would not be questioned, and the minds of men would be prepared to believe it. Then it would seem as a confirmatory proof of His Divinity. No danger of scandal from any subsequent manifestation of weakness, and the Apostles would be better able to proclaim it after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them (see xvi. 20).

TEXT.

10. *And his disciples asked him, saying: Why then do the Scribes say that Elias must come first?*

11. *But he answering, said to them: Elias indeed shall come, and restore all things.*

12. *But I say to you, that Elias is already come, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they had a mind. So also the Son of man shall suffer from them.*

13. *Then the disciples understood, that he had spoken to them of John the Baptist.*

14. *And when he was come to the multitude, there came to him a man falling down on his knees before him, saying: Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic, and suffereth much: for he falleth often into the fire, and often into the water.*

15. *And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*

16. *Then Jesus answered and said: O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.*

17. *And Jesus rebuked him, and the devil went out of him, and the child was cured from that hour.*

18. *Then came the disciples to Jesus secretly, and said: Why could not we cast him out?*

19. *Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. For amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you.*

20. *But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting*

COMMENTARY.

10. "*And His disciples asked Him,*" that is, Peter, James, and John, on coming down from the mountain, and before they reached the other Apostles, or the crowd (v. 14). "*Why then do the Scribes,*" that is, those versed in the law, who expounded to the people the contents of the law. St. Mark has (ix. 10), "*why then do the Scribes and the Pharisees say that Elias must come first?*" What their motive in putting this question was, is not easily seen, and is variously accounted for by commentators. Some, with St. Jerome, suppose, that the Apostles regarded our Lord's Transfiguration as the commencement of His glorious reign; and having heard Him refer to His resurrection as not far distant, after which, His glorious reign was, in their minds, to go on without interruption; and having been informed by those who were the authorized expositors of the Word of God, that Elias was to come beforehand, they ask, how it was that Elias did not precede that reign. Instead of preceding, he only appeared together with Him in glory, and suddenly disappeared. Others, with St. Chrysostom, suppose, that the Apostles, having been now convinced, beyond a doubt, of the Divinity of their Master, could not conceive how the words of the Scribes, assuring them, from the prophecy of Malachias, that Elias should have preceded His coming, could be true. The circumstance of their having seen Elias on Mount Thabor, reminded them of this teaching of the Scribes regarding Him. The Scribes did not sufficiently distinguish, or, perhaps, maliciously confounded, the twofold coming of our Redeemer; and, probably, adduced, as an argument against our Redeemer's Divinity, that Elias had not preceded Him, as the prophet Malachias (iv. 6) had foretold. It is strongly in favour of the former interpretation, that the question would seem to arise out of, and be suggested by, his words, "*until the Son of man be risen from the dead.*" For, from St. Mark (ix. 9), it would seem they were in doubt what these words meant, and asked no questions of our Redeemer regarding it, probably, for fear of hearing some disclosures respecting His death, which would not be altogether palatable to them; or, for fear of drawing on them the rebuke lately administered to Peter in connexion with the same subject. But, whatever might have been their doubts, in other respects, regarding the full import and consequences of the words, there was one idea it seemed to suggest, viz., that His glorious coming was then to be manifested, and that Elias should precede that coming.

11. Our Redeemer, entering into an explanation of the prophecy of Malachias, distinguishes His twofold coming. First, he says, referring to the second coming of Elias, when he is to precede the second and glorious coming of the Son of God in majesty, to judge the world, "*Elias indeed shall come, and restore all things.*" Mark (ix. 11) has, "*Elias when he shall come first, shall restore all things.*" These latter words are commonly understood of his converting the remnant of the Jews (Eccles. xlviii. 10), just as it is commonly believed regarding Enoch, that he shall be instrumental in bringing the stray Gentiles into the bosom of the Church (Eccles. xlv. 16). The words of Malachias (iv. 5, 6,) refer to Elias in person; for, according to the Septuagint (Mal. iv. 5), he is called "*Elias the Thesbite,*" and it is to him in person our Lord refers in this verse, in connexion with His second glorious coming, to which alone the words of Malachias (iv. 5) could apply, "*before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" Regarding this Elias in person, St. Mark (ix. 11), says, "*and how it is written of the Son of man,*" that is, as it is written of the Son of man, "*that He must suffer many things,*" &c. So shall Elias also suffer at the end of the world.—Ven. Bede. (See Mark ix. 11, Commentary).

12. "*But I say to you,*" &c. As the Scribes and Pharisees would seem to attach great weight to the non-appearance of Elias, as an argument against our Lord's Divinity; hence, distinguishing between His first and second coming, our Redeemer says, that the Scribes, even on their own showing, are inexcusable; because, His first coming had its Elias, or precursor, also, in the person of one who acted as precursor, by exhibiting the spirit and power of Elias, and discharging his exalted functions of "*converting the hearts of the fathers to the children*"—the duty assigned to Elias in person, before the second coming of the Son of God (Mal. iv. 6).

"*And they knew him not,*" they would not recognise or acknowledge him. "*But they have done to him whatever they had a mind.*" From this it is inferred that the Scribes and Pharisees had a hand in advising the death of John the Baptist.

St. Mark (ix. 12), says of John, "*Elias also is come (and they have done to him whatsoever they would) as it is written of him.*" As there is no vestige of any prophecy regarding John's death, it is not easily seen how the words, "*as it is written of him,*" are verified. Hence, some including the words ("*and they have done to him,*" &c.), within a parenthesis, as it is found in the corrected editions of the Bible, connect the words, "*as it is written of him*" (Isaias xl., "*vox clamantis,*" &c.), immediately with, "*Elias also is come.*" Others say, the sufferings of John, were mystically referred to in the account left us of the future sufferings of Elias, by whom he was prefigured. For, as Elias was persecuted by Jezabel, so was John by Herodias, not to speak of other points of resemblance. Others say, the sufferings of John were predicted in some prophetic book now lost (see Mark iv. 12).

"*So also the Son of man shall suffer from them,*" that is, from the impious and wicked in general.

13. The disciples understood Him to refer to John the Baptist, who was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, to exhort men to repentance (see xi. 14).

14. "*And when He was come to the multitude,*" &c. St. Luke (ix. 37) says, this happened "*the following day when they had come down from the mountain.*" On the day after the Transfiguration—our Redeemer having most likely devoted the night to prayer on the mountain—when they came down from the mountain, He saw a great crowd about His disciples, whom He left at the foot of the mountain, among the rest, "*the Scribes disputing with them*" (Mark ix. 13). The subject about which the Scribes, or those learned in the law, were disputing, probably regarded the unsuccessful attempts of the disciples to expel the demon; and, most likely, the Scribes, in the absence of our Divine Redeemer, availed themselves of this circumstance to lessen their credit, as well as that of their Divine Master, with the crowd, and to charge them with acting on former occasions when they expelled demons, not from Divine, but diabolical agency. We are also informed by St. Mark (*ibidem*), that the people on seeing our Lord, "*were astonished and seized with fear.*" probably, either because they regarded His timely and unexpected appearance as extraordinary, as if He knew the embarrassment His disciples were in, and came to their rescue; or, because the brightness of majesty might have been still apparent on His countenance after the Transfiguration, as happened Moses after his long converse with God on Mount Sinai (2 Cor. iii. 7).

"*Running, they saluted Him,*" and reverently welcomed Him. We are told by St. Mark, that our Redeemer asked what the subject of their questioning or controversy was. This He knew already, but He proposed the question with a view of rescuing His disciples from their embarrassment, that thus He might create an occasion for performing the miracle. Neither party reply, the disciples being, probably, con-

founded at their unsuccessful attempts at expelling the devil; and the Scribes being afraid to expose their malice to the severe reproaches of our Redeemer; and, moreover, the father of the child whose cure was, probably, the subject of dispute, anticipated every reply, by at once rushing forward, and, casting himself on his knees, besought Him to have pity on his son. "*his only son*" (Luke ix. 38), "*who was a lunatic, and suffers much.*" Mark (ix. 16), says, "*he hath a dumb devil;*" and our Redeemer, in casting him out (Mark ix. 24), calls him "*a deaf and dumb spirit.*" St. Matthew calls him "*a lunatic.*" Very probably, the evil spirit, knowing the times men are afflicted with lunacy, acted on this boy at those times, with a view of inducing the belief, that the moon was the cause of the sorrows and sufferings of the men thus affected, that he might cause them to blaspheme this great luminary, this remarkable creature of God. From the account given of him by St. Mark (ix. 17), his illness would seem to be like epilepsy, or the falling sickness. These effects were produced by the devil. The effects mentioned by St. Mark, in v. 17, are, for brevity' sake, expressed by St. Matthew, "*and he suffereth much.*"

"*For, he falleth often into the fire,*" &c. These words were, most probably, used by the father of the boy, in reply to our Redeemer's question, regarding the length of time he had been thus afflicted (Mark ix. 20, 21); and then the father says, "*the devil oftentimes cast him into the fire and into waters;*" but these circumstances are, for brevity' sake, mentioned here, by anticipation, by St. Matthew.

15. "*And I brought him to Thy disciples,*" &c. This, probably, suggested the questioning among the Scribes, respecting the nature and origin of the power successfully exercised by the Apostles, on former occasions, in the expulsion of demons.

16. This has reference to the incredulous Jewish nation, to whose incredulity our Redeemer, in the first instance, and in public, attributes the unsuccessful efforts of His Apostles. Their failure was owing to the incredulity of the Jews, and to their own want of faith, as appears from the following: our Redeemer takes occasion to tax, in the first instance, and in public, the father of the boy, and the Jewish people, in general, with their incredulity. This is prominently referred to here, although, no doubt, the want of faith in the Apostles is also taxed indirectly by Him.

"*O unbelieving and perverse,*" that is, incorrigible, "*generation,*" people and nation, "*how long shall I be with you?*" &c. This simply denotes the indignation of our Redeemer at the incredulity of the Jews; and conveys that He is losing His time and labour, in working so many prodigies among them, to confirm His doctrine, and bring them to the faith; just as a physician, who would find, that all his prescriptions were neglected, by a languishing patient, would exclaim: "*How long shall I be coming to this house, this sick bed, when all my labour, and pains, and skill, are lost, undervalued, and become useless?*" Others say, these words express a desire of dying, of leaving the Jews, and transferring His graces to the Gentiles.

"*Bring him to Me.*" Even in His anger, He remembers mercy; whilst He reproves their infidelity, He pities the poor sufferer.

17. St. Mark tells us (ix. 19), that when brought before our Lord, the spirit troubled him, and rolling on the ground, he foamed; and that our Redeemer questioned the father how long he was thus suffering. The father said that he had been so from his infancy, and that the devil cast him into the fire and water which is expressed by St. Matthew (v. 14), that "*he falleth into the fire,*" &c. And

our Redeemer having called upon the father to believe, thereby insinuating that it was to his want of faith, the unsuccessful efforts of the disciples, of which he complained, were partly attributable, he exclaimed, "*I believe, Lord; help my unbelief,*" i.e., my weak, imperfect faith. Then, our Redeemer threatened the unclean spirit, which is expressed here by St. Matthew, "*Jesus rebuked him,*" as is more circumstantially expressed by St. Mark, "*He threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him: Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee go out of him, and enter no more into him*" (Mark ix. 24).

"*And the devil went out of him.*" St. Mark (ix. 25) describes it thus: "*And crying out, and greatly tearing him, he went out of him, and he became as one dead,*" &c.

"*And the child was cured from that hour.*" From this, it is quite clear that St. Matthew regarded, as the effect of diabolical possession and agency, what the father of the boy calls, "*lunacy.*" And, indeed, in the account left us by St. Mark (ix. 17-21), the father himself attributes the convulsive spasms to the evil spirit that possessed him from his infancy.

18. The Apostles, fearing lest they might have incurred the displeasure of their Divine Master, and lest, also, the power of miracles formerly conferred on them might have been withdrawn, in punishment of their sins, "*come to Him secretly;*" or, as St. Mark more fully expresses it, "*when He was come into the house, and ask Him, Why we could not cast him out?*" They did not wish to ask in public, lest they should be redargued before the multitude; and, on the other hand, our Blessed Lord did not wish to put to shame in public, those who were destined to be the future teachers of the earth, and the foundations of His Church. He wished to consult for their authority, by not publicly reproaching them before the multitude, who might afterwards undervalue their teaching.

19. He attributes this failure to two causes—the imbecility of their faith, and want of prayer and fasting. "*Because of your unbelief.*" Their faith was weaker than it should be, considering the length of time they spent in the school of Christ, and the Apostolic office conferred on them.

"*As a grain of mustard seed.*" This was a proverbial phrase in vogue among the Jews, to designate the smallest quantity; as, on the other hand, the removing of a mountain was an hyperbolical phrase, designating a thing almost impossible of accomplishment. The words may then mean: If the Apostles had possessed the least portion of that active, lively, energetic faith of miracles which they ought to have, and which, although small, relative to them, was *in itself* very great, they might perform the most arduous and stupendous wonders. The lively, active properties of the faith referred to is clearly expressed by the well-known properties of the mustard seed. This faith of miracles includes theological or Divine faith in the omnipotent power and goodness of God, together with the firmest, unbounded confidence, that He will grant the fruit of our petitions. This faith of miracles could not be regarded, *in itself*, as very small, since St. Paul calls it, *omnem fidem*—"all faith" (1 Cor. xiii. 2); but, whilst *very great* as regards the rest of the faithful, it might be regarded as very small, *comparatively*, and in regard to the Apostles. Had they possessed this active, energetic faith of miracles in the *smallest degree*, relative to them, not only could they have expelled the demon, who resisted them, and whose fierce resistance probably caused them such diffidence; but they would be able to perform the most stupendous wonders. The allusion to the "*grain of mustard seed,*" regards not alone the smallness of a thing, but also its active, energetic properties. It conveys a reproach to the Apostles for not possessing this faith in the present instance.

"You shall say to this mountain." Mount Thabor, at the foot of which they were staying. St. Jerome takes the word in a mystical sense, to designate the devil, this fallen angel of pride. Elsewhere allusion is made to this faith of miracles (xxi. 21).

Of course it is supposed that the glory of God, and our own or neighbour's good, require the exercise of this great power, and that its exercise would not proceed from vain curiosity or presumption; because, if so, it would not proceed from *"faith."* We have not read of the Apostles having transferred mountains. Most likely, no occasion or necessity occurred for their doing so. But, we read of them performing more wonderful and arduous things, such as the raising of the dead to life; and in latter times, we read of this miracle having been performed by St. Gregory Thaumaturgus (Eusebius, *Histor. Lib. vii. c. 25*). No doubt, the Apostles would have removed mountains if the necessity or some justifying cause for their doing so had arisen; moreover, they may have done so, as all the miracles of the saints are not recorded.

"And nothing shall be impossible to you," acting under the influence of this faith, whenever the glory of God and the salvation of men shall demand it; but not when it is sought to gratify curiosity, or please men. Hence, our Redeemer refused to work miracles in the presence of Herod, demanding him to do so, from motives of curiosity and vain glory.

20. Besides the want of faith—and faith is a general condition required for working all miracles—a second cause of their failure is here assigned, peculiar to this and like cases. *"This kind,"* is understood by St. Chrysostom to refer to devils in general, to the whole genus of demons. This, however, is improbable, as we find that the Apostles expelled some evil spirits by the simple invocation of the name of Christ (Luke x. 17), without having recourse to prayer and fasting. Hence, the words refer to a certain description of obstinate and ferocious, powerful devils, whose expulsion requires, not only that the person who undertakes it be gifted with the ordinary faith of miracles, sufficient for the expulsion of ordinary demons; but also that this faith be increased and intensified by fervent *"prayer,"* extraordinary confidence in God, *"and fasting,"* which, by subjecting the flesh to the Spirit, by elevating and uniting the soul to God, better fits him for wrestling with the demons, who dread a man of *"faith,"* of prayer and fasting, as they do the good angels of God. This description of ferocious demons, sometimes for a long time, possess men, so that their possession becomes a kind of second nature for the unfortunate man possessed. Hence, our Redeemer asked (Mark ix. 20), *"How long is it that this happened to him?"*

Fasting wonderfully assists us in rendering our prayers more fervent; in causing our minds to be disengaged from earthly desires, and raising up our thoughts to Heaven. *"Qui corporali jejuniis, vitia comprimis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et prœmia"* (Preface of the Mass for Lent). Faith expels the demon by believing; prayer, by petitioning; fasting, by tormenting and starving him; as an enemy is driven out of a fortress, not only by force, but by starving him out (Maldonatus). Hence, the merit of fasting, so much decried by the enemies of religion and God's Church. Can that be true religion that affects to undervalue, and scorns what our Blessed Redeemer recommends? It is on account of the words of our Blessed Lord here, the Church, in her exorcisms, employs, besides the invocation of the name of Christ, much prayer and fasting. As there are certain orders of angels naturally more powerful than others; and, as the demons fell from the several orders of angelic spirits, and, as is commonly believed, are not shorn by their fall, of their natural strength; hence, there are certain demons more powerful than others, in wrestling with whom greater strength and power are required, as in the present instance. The fasting

here recommended is, by no means, opposed to what our Redeemer says of not fasting while the Bridegroom was on earth amongst His disciples, as this latter refers to immoderate fasting, such as the disciples of John were practising, and such as they charged the disciples of our Lord, at the instigation of the Pharisees, with not practising. Our Redeemer Himself assigns other reasons (ix. 14-17). He fasted forty days and forty nights, and it was in imitation of His forty days' fast, which had been long before prefigured in the Law and in the Prophets by the forty days' fast of Moses (Exod. xxxiv. 28) and Elias (3 Kings xix. 8), these glorious witnesses of His manifestation in Thabor, that the Church instituted and continued from the earliest Apostolic age, the forty days' fast of Lent, "which has been regarded by the entire Church throughout the globe, among the chief points of Ecclesiastical discipline, consecrated in some measure by Jesus Christ Himself, handed down by the Apostles, prescribed by the sacred canons, retained and observed by the Church from the very beginning. It is the watchword of our warfare, whereby we are distinguished from the enemies of the Cross of Christ, and avert the scourges of Divine vengeance," &c. (Benedict XIV. Brief, *non ambigimus*.)

TEXT.

21. *And when they abode together in Galilee, Jesus said to them : The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men :*

22. *And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again. And they were troubled exceedingly.*

COMMENTARY.

21. "*Abode in Galilee.*" The Greek will admit of its being rendered, "*travelling through Galilee*" (*Αναστρεφόμενον*), and this is perfectly in accordance with the words of St. Mark (ix. 29) : "*and they departed from thence, and passed through Galilee.*" Our Redeemer left the neighbourhood of Thabor, where, after His Transfiguration, He cured the sick boy; and as this miracle had gained for Him the applause of the multitude (Luke ix. 44), He called the attention of His disciples to the prediction He was about to make a second time, as He had formerly done at Caesarea Philippi, regarding His cross and Passion. This He did with the view of counteracting any feeling of vain glory the Apostles might conceive from the praises bestowed by the crowd. It was to show how voluntarily He suffered, that He uttered this prophecy, on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem; and He wished His journey to be kept secret (Mark ix. 29), most likely, lest the people of Galilee, by whom he was revered, should place any obstacle to His proceeding on His journey to Jerusalem.

"*The Son of man shall be betrayed*" &c. He was delivered up by His Father, who gave Him over to their power; He was delivered up by Himself, who voluntarily underwent death; by Judas, who handed Him over to the Scribes and Chief Priests; these delivered Him to Pilate; and Pilate, to the soldiers.

22. "*And they were troubled exceedingly,*" at the tidings of His death, and at their being bereaved of one whom they loved so tenderly. SS. Luke and Mark say, "*they did not understand the word.*" How, then, be grieved? They clearly understood that He was to be put to death, and hence, their grief; but they could not understand how He, whom they believed and professed to be the Son of God, immortal and impassible, could be subjected to death; or, how such a thing could be reconciled with His glorious reign, which they expected.

TEXT.

23. *And when they were come to Capharnaum, they that received the didrachmas, came to Peter, and said to him : Doth not your Master pay the didrachmas?*

24. *He said : Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying : What is thy opinion, Simon? The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive tribute or custom? of their own children, or of strangers?*

25. *And he said : Of strangers. Jesus said to him : Then the children are free.*

26. *But that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea, and cast in a hook : and that fish which shall first come up, take : and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater : take that, and give it to them for me and thee.*

COMMENTARY.

23. After quitting Thabor, and leaving the small village at its foot, called by some, Cheseleth-Thabor, our Redeemer had all His thoughts directed to another mountain, on which the justice of His Father was waiting for Him for the long period of four thousand years, the bloody Mount of Calvary, whereon He was to undergo another Transfiguration, quite the opposite of that exhibited on Thabor. Thither He was now directing His steps. He reached Capharnaum, where He had fixed His abode for some time, probably, with a view of arranging affairs connected with His abode there, as this was His last visit to that place. On His arrival, those charged with the collection of the tax, referred to here, out of feelings of respect, refrained from personal application to Him, and addressed themselves to Peter, either, because he may have been the only one with Him, or, because, he was supposed to be most intimate with his Divine Master.

They ask him, "*Doth not your Master pay the didrachmas?*" What this tax refers to, is a subject of much controversy with commentators. Dismissing, for brevity's sake, the improbable conjectures or opinions hazarded on this subject, it may be said, with truth, that the probable opinions are reduced to two. By some, it is maintained, after St. Jerome, Ven. Bede, &c., that the tribute in question was a sort of capitation tax, imposed on the Jews, either by Pompey, after he took Jerusalem, and made it tributary to the Romans; or, by Cæsar Augustus, after the census taken under Cyrenus (Luke ii.), and on the plan, or after the model, of the tribute which each person among the Jews, after having reached his twentieth year and upwards, was bound to pay, for the repairs and service of the Tabernacle, as a price for his soul and to avert a scourge, whenever a census or numbering of the people was made (Exod. xxx. 13, 14). This tribute, at the earliest period, was to be paid as often as the census of the people would be made, whether by the order of God, or on account of some public necessity. It appears that afterwards, the wants of the Tabernacle or Temple, at any time, were considered a sufficient reason for demanding this tribute (2 Paralip. xxiv. 5-9). After their return from the Babylonish captivity, the Jews voluntarily submitted to an annual tribute of *one-third* of a sicle for the support of the Temple (2 Esdras x. 32). Afterwards, the enactment of Moses (Exod. xxx.), was regarded by the Jews as of perpetual annual obligation, binding on all Jews, whether residing in Judea, or in foreign countries. Hence, the two drachmæ (equivalent to *half* a sicle), referred to here. This ancient religious tax was, according to St. Jerome, the model of the Roman tax referred to here. (See Dixon's "Introduction," vol. ii., p. 75, &c.)

Others, with St. Hilary, &c., maintain, that there is question here, not of a tax paid unto, or imposed by the Romans, or any civil authorities whatsoever, but of

the very tax which the Jews religiously paid, as self imposed, for the repairs and service of the temple, sacrifices, support of priests, and religious ministers, and that it was for this tax application was made here.

Père Mauduit devotes a lengthy and able dissertation, to prove this latter opinion, and to refute that of St. Jerome. He shows, that the words of our Redeemer to St. Peter, "*The kings of the earth, of whom do they take tribute?*" &c., and the reasoning which they involve, are quite clear and cogent in this latter opinion, since, the tax being paid to God, and for the use of His house, His eternal and consubstantial Son was, according to the usages of the world, naturally exempted from paying the tribute given to His Heavenly Father. Whereas, such reasoning is hardly applicable in the former opinion; for, although our Redeemer was the Son of the King of kings, to whom "*belongs the earth and its fulness,*" still, by His own free act, He rendered Himself the subject of earthly princes; and not being the son of Augustus, or of any other temporal ruler, He owed it to His condition, as a subject, to pay tribute to the ruling powers, to which every subject is bound (Rom. xiii.), as He owed it to the nature He voluntarily assumed, to submit to its infirmities (sin and ignorance excepted). He suffered hunger, thirst, lassitude, &c. Mauduit refutes another reason adduced in favour of St. Jerome's opinion, grounded on the use of the word, *κηνσος* (*census*), by St. Matthew, which the advocates of St. Jerome's opinion assert, refers to a tax imposed by secular authority. According to him, this proves nothing; because, our Lord's question to St. Peter was very general, comprising all sorts of imposts and tributes levied by sovereigns on their subjects, "*tributum vel censum;*" all kinds of imposts, from which the children of sovereigns had a claim for exemption by title of birth. Moreover, this tribute was fixed, whilst a tax on property varies, which Augustus had, probably, in view, in ordering the census in Judea, under Quirinus. Mauduit, therefore, concludes, that there is question here of the tribute referred to. (Exod. xxx. 13, &c.) According to the ordinance therein contained, whenever the wants of the temple demanded it, there was a numbering, from time to time, of the children of Israel, who reached their twentieth year and upwards, and all who were registered of this age paid two drachmæ, or half a sicle. But, in course of time, this tribute, which first was only paid occasionally, became annual, owing to the great demands on the temple, in sacrifices and its various services. Collectors for that purpose were established in the several cities and towns of Judea, who conveyed their contributions to Jerusalem each year, on the occasion of the Paschal solemnity; and, as our Redeemer had fixed His abode, at Capharnaum, He was applied to for this tribute. The words addressed to St. Peter, "*Doth not your Master pay the didrachmas?*" insinuate, that many either refused, or evaded the payment of this tribute, which is greatly in favour of the opinion of Mauduit, as this would not be allowed, if it were a tax imposed by the Romans.

After the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, Vespasian commanded all the Jews, wherever they happened to reside, to pay into the imperial exchequer, the tribute they formerly paid for the exigencies of the Temple of Jerusalem.

The word, "*didrachma,*" means, "*two drachmæ,*" the value of which is supposed to be about 1s. and 3d. (15d.) of our money. The drachma was an Attic coin, one-eighth of an ounce in weight. The "*stater,*" also (v. 26), was an Attic coin, equal to *four drachmas*; weight, half an ounce. St. Jerome tells us (Ezechiel iv.), that a "*stater,*" is equal in value to a "*sicle,*" and that the didrachma, is half a *stater* or *sicle*. Josephus (Lib. iii. de Antiq. c. 12), explaining the Law of Exodus, regarding the

"*half sicle*," which each Jew, who was numbered at the age of twenty or upwards, was obliged to pay, tells us that a *sicle* was a Hebrew coin, equivalent to four Attic drachmæ

24. Peter, answering in the affirmative, says, his Master was wont to pay the tribute in question. This he said, either because he saw Him pay it before; or because he knew, from our Redeemer's doctrine and teaching, how disposed He was to obey legitimate authority, and every just law enacted by such authority.

"*When he was come into the house*," and about to consult His Divine Master on the matter, our Redeemer "*prevented him*," anticipated him, thus showing that He knew his most secret thoughts; and, therefore, as the Searcher of hearts, and diviner of thoughts, He showed, by this very act, that He was not strictly bound to pay the tribute. He still more shows this by reasoning, and by words.

"*Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute or custom?*" That is, what is the rule observed, and the usage universally followed in paying tribute or taxes to earthly kings? Do they receive tribute from their own children, or from strangers, that is, from the rest of their subjects, who are not their children, or belong not to their household?

25. St. Peter's reply is, that kings of the earth do not receive tribute from their own children, since it is partly to provide, in some way, for their children, and their household, they receive tribute, but only from "*strangers*," who belong not to their house or family.

"*Then the children are free*," as if He said, the rule and usage observed among earthly sovereigns—a rule founded on natural equity and propriety—in regard to the taxing of the children and the members of their family, ought also to be applicable to the King of heaven, the great source and foundation of justice and rectitude among men. Hence, as earthly sovereigns exempt from tribute, their children, for whom they ought to provide and lay up stores (2 Cor. xii. 14), I, who am the eternal Son of the King of heaven, may justly claim exemption from the tribute paid to Him for His temple. This reasoning might also apply, in a certain sense, though not so clearly or directly, if we follow the opinion of St. Jerome. If the kings of the earth exempt their children, it is but just that I, who am the Son of the King of kings, should participate in these privileges enjoyed by their children, and be exempt from paying tribute to any man. The force of our Redeemer's reasoning seems clear, in the opinion of St. Jerome; and the comparison instituted between *the kings of the earth*, and the King of *heaven*, and the treatment received by their children from them, and that which the Son of the heavenly King is supposed to receive from Him, viz., exemption from the tribute paid to them, greatly favours this latter opinion. In this opinion, there is no ground for the false teaching, that Christians are not bound to pay tribute to princes, which is so directly at variance with the doctrine of the Apostle—"Let every soul be subject to higher powers," and this subjection partly consists in paying "*tribute to whom tribute is due*" (Rom. xiii. 7).

26. "*Scandalize them*," by leading them to suppose or judge, that we are indifferent to the service of the temple, and thus undervalue our ministry, or (if there be question of taxes imposed by the civil authority), that we are opposed to civil authority, and thus incite them to insubordination and rebellion. There is clearly question of "*scandalum datum*" which would be given, if he, whom the tax gatherer did not

recognise as the Son of God—which our Lord did not wish yet publicly to proclaim—would refuse the tribute. Our Redeemer's mode of acting points out to us our obligation to forego our rights sometimes, when, by enforcing or insisting on them, our neighbour would be scandalized.

"Go to the sea and cast in a hook," &c. Our Redeemer thus shows He possessed nothing in this world. He also displays His power and majesty, His dominion not only over the land, but (what no earthly power can control), over the sea and its inhabitants. He tells him to take the required sum out of the first fish he would catch. By this miracle, He showed His Apostle, that He was free from paying the tribute. He paid it, solely from the motive of avoiding scandal. He also guards against weakening his faith, or scandalizing him; this He does, by the singular exhibition and manifestation of His prescience and sovereign power.

"You shall find a stater," in value equal to a *sicle*, equivalent to four drachmas, that is, about 2s. 6d. of our money.

"For Me and thee." Why not for the other disciples as well? Various reasons are assigned. Some say, Peter alone was with our Redeemer then. Others, with St. Jerome, say, that Peter was the head of the Apostles, and the representative of Christ and His Church, in whom, as chief, the rest were comprised. It appears, most likely, it was done with a view of specially honouring Peter by this new mark of distinction, and to reward his faith and humility, by appointing him as the medium of executing this commission, with which a miracle was connected

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Lord rebukes the ambitious aspirations of the Apostles, and shows the means of attaining true greatness hereafter, viz., humility (1-4). He next shows how dear the humble are to Him—also the crime of scandalizing them, and the dreadful punishment awaiting the scandalous sinner—and the sacrifices which, therefore, should be made sooner than be guilty of it (5-9). He adduces other reasons to dissuade us from giving scandal to our brethren—their angels will be witnesses against us (10). The Son of God Himself died to save those whom we destroy (11), and by the touching parable of the lost sheep, He shows how the scandalous sinner opposes the earnest will of God to save sinners (12-14). Our Lord next points out the mode of administering correction (15-20); and, in reply to Peter, He points out the duty of pardoning an offending brother, be his offences ever so numerous (21-22). By a very interesting and moving example, He points out the necessity of our pardoning our offending brethren, from our very hearts, their trifling offences against us, after the example of God, who has so often pardoned our most grievous offences against His Divine Majesty (23-35).

TEXT.

A*T that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven?*

2. *And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them,*

3. *And said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

4. *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.*

5. *And he that shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*

6. *But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea.*

7. *Wo to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come: but nevertheless wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh.*

8. *And if thy hand, or thy foot, scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is*

better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.

9. *And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*At that hour,*" &c. On His way to Capharnaum (xvii. 23), we are informed by the other Evangelists (Mark ix. 33; Luke ix. 46), that the thought entered the minds of His Apostles—a thought to which they gave expression by disputing among themselves—who among them was destined to occupy the first place in His kingdom. When they arrived at His house in Capharnaum, our Redeemer, knowing their thoughts and disputations, questioned them about their disputations in the way. They, probably, from a feeling of shame, were silent (Mark ix. 33). Then our Redeemer sat down, and, called together the twelve. They then took courage, knowing that their inmost thoughts and disputations in the way were known to Him, and proposed the question here recorded by St. Matthew. This they proposed in a general way, out of a feeling of modesty, without any particular reference to themselves. "*Who, thinkest Thou, is the greater?*" &c. From the above account, the apparent contradiction between the Evangelists is easily reconciled. The three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record the entire transaction, each recording a part. Luke records the commencement of the dispute; Mark, what occurred next, viz., when our Redeemer questioned them regarding it; and St. Matthew, the last part of it, when the Apostles wished to have the question solved by our Redeemer Himself.

"*That hour,*" refers to the time they were at Capharnaum, when the occurrence regarding the payment of the tribute money took place. "*Hour,*" frequently denotes *time* in SS. Scripture; thus, "*the last hour,*" denotes the "*last time.*"

What it is that occasioned this dispute about priority is uncertain. Some say, it was occasioned by the privilege conferred on Peter, of paying the tribute money. But, this dispute occurred on the way, before Peter was thus honoured. Others assign different reasons. The most probable opinion seems to be, that it was occasioned by the reference made by our Redeemer to His resurrection, which they regarded as the commencement of His glorious reign, when He was to distribute the chief places in His new kingdom to His followers. On other occasions, when reference is made by Him to His resurrection, we find similar disputes about precedence to arise. (xx. 20, &c.; Luke xxii. 24, &c.) Not unlikely, different claims to precedence were put forward in behalf of several candidates. In behalf of some, priority of call to the Apostleship; of others, blood relationship with the future king, as in the case of the sons of Zebedee; of others, the communication of more intimate secrets by our Blessed Lord, as in the case of James the Greater and John; and, in John's case, the manifestation of greater affection by our Lord; while, in behalf of Peter, might be alleged, besides some of the foregoing claims, the special promise made by our Divine Redeemer not long before. (xvi. 17, &c.)

"*In the kingdom of heaven.*" This is understood by Maldonatus of the Church militant—1st. Because our Lord clearly rebukes them for affecting precedence in this kingdom; now, he says, it would be no fault whatever in them, to desire the highest place in heaven. Again, the occasion of the dispute was, according to him, the preference shown to Peter, which had reference to the Church on earth. Others hold, that it refers to heaven; since it is of this our Redeemer treats in His reply (v. 3). The most probable opinion is, that the Apostles refer to the kingdom of the Messiah after His resurrection. While still imbued with the gross and carnal

notions of their race, regarding His future reign, they imagined, that our Redeemer would found on earth, a glorious kingdom, a temporal rule far exceeding in splendour and external show the reign of Solomon, or any other of their most magnificent princes, and would assign different posts and places of honour and pre-eminence, like earthly potentates, who liberally dispense places of preferment, to the princes of their kingdom. But, our Redeemer in His reply, transfers the question regarding His temporal reign to the enjoyment of heavenly bliss and pre-eminence.

2. "*And Jesus calling,*" &c. St. Mark (ix. 34) informs us, that before doing this, He said, "*If any man desire to be first, he shall be,*" that is, let him be, "*the last of all, and the servant of all,*" which may mean, that whosoever desires "*to be first,*" in merit in the sight of God, must become the humblest of all, and exhibit this humility in his dealings with others; so that his future glory in heaven shall be proportioned to his humility at present. And this is borne out by verse 4, and by St. Luke, "*he that is lesser among you all, he is the greater;*" or, the words may mean, whosoever aspires to the highest post amongst you, should act towards the others with the greatest humility, unlike those who aspire to places of pre-eminence among the Gentiles. This derives probability from what is said (Matt. xx. 25), where our Lord contrasts the conduct which should distinguish the chiefs of His kingdom with that which is exhibited by those placed in power among the Gentiles. Both meanings may be intended, viz., to inform us, how one becomes truly great before God, and how the ecclesiastical superior ought to demean himself towards his inferiors. He should be the servant of all, exercising his authority for the benefit of others, and not for his own profit or advancement. After uttering the words above recited, our Redeemer, calling unto Him a little child, took him in His arms, and having embraced him (Mark ix. 35), to show His love for innocence, He "*set him in the midst of them,*" near Himself (Luke ix. 47). Probably, He Himself, was seated in the midst of the twelve. The more forcibly to impress them with the truth He meant to inculcate, our Redeemer employs the powerful medium of instruction by *example*, a mode of instruction well suited to the genius of the oriental people, and frequently in use among them, as may be seen from several places of the Old Testament. Nothing was more usual with the Prophets than to employ symbolical actions for the expression of ideas. Isaiah walks naked and without shoes, to convey a warning to the Jews (Isa. xx. 2). Jeremiah carries chains on his neck (Jer. xxvii. 2); the same may be also seen in Ezekiel. (xii. 17, &c.) Our Redeemer sometimes also employs the same in the New Testament, for the purpose of conveying, and more forcibly impressing His heavenly doctrine. Thus, He washes His disciples' feet, "*exemplum dedi vobis,*" &c. He breathes on the Apostles in giving the Holy Ghost, &c. The same method is employed here; because nothing leaves so distinct an impression on the mind as that conveyed directly through the senses, "*sequis irritant animos demissa per aures quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus*" (Horace, *Ars Poetica*). Our Redeemer wishes, by this example, to cure in His Apostles the wound caused in them by the false love of glory and jealousy, by desiring them to substitute in place thereof a holy contention of humility, "*vult desiderium glorie, humilitatis contentione sanare*" (St. Jerome), and, therefore, He places a little child in the midst of them.

3. And He tells them, that "*unless they be converted,*" in case such dispositions of humility were wanting; for, the word does not imply, that the Apostles really wanted these dispositions; but, the words are hypothetical and general for all others. Others understand it, unless you be converted, and give up the ambitious feelings which now

animate you (Jansenius). It is better, however, to take it in the former sense, and not imply, as is done in this latter interpretation, that the Apostles were in the state of mortal sin, excluding them from the kingdom of heaven.

"*And become as little children,*" that is, become, by an act of the will, by merit, what the little child is by age, viz., small in their own estimation, and by virtue, as the child is by age, and in person. In this sense, our Redeemer desires us to become like children, but not like them in puerilities, or want of judgment, &c. We should imitate their innocence, sincerity, exemption from malice, from envy and duplicity. This the Apostle recommends (1 Cor. xiv.), "*nolite fieri pueri sensibus; sed malitia parvuli estote,*" &c., also (1 Peter ii. 2); and in reference to the subject proposed, He wishes us to become like children in our contempt of honours, &c. In order to understand the force of the comparison, St. Hilary (*in hunc locum*) tells us, we must represent the state of infancy as a state of simplicity, in which one is attached merely to his father and mother, incapable of hating any one, desires neither riches nor honours, wholly innocent and free from vices, and from pride—of all vices, the greatest. If there be little children, addicted to anger, jealousy, lying, &c., it is not of such our Redeemer speaks here.

4. Having deterred them from the pursuit of ambition, and shown the necessity of humility, our Redeemer next points out the merit of humility, and replies to the question (v. 1), "*Whosoever, therefore, . . . he is the greatest.*" Our Redeemer does not confine Himself to saying, "*he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,*" as in the preceding; but, "*he is the greatest*" (ὁ μέγας). The article imparts to the comparison greater strength of meaning. He shall be the greatest, because more conformable to Me. And here He does not speak of "*little children*" in general (as in v. 3), but, "*as this little child,*" to show that He refers to a greater, a more perfect degree of humility, the child in question being, probably, a very small, young, little child. While the virtue of humility is absolutely necessary for entering the kingdom of heaven, a more perfect degree of this virtue is necessary for being the greatest in that kingdom. How different are the means employed for attaining greatness in an earthly kingdom.

5. "*Shall receive,*" that is, perform towards Him the several offices of charity, such as hospitality, &c. The word, "*receives,*" embraces all the duties of charity.

"*One such little child,*" that is, a person truly humble, resembling a little child. For, it is of such He speaks (v. 6), when treating of scandal.

"*Receiveth Me,*" to which St. Mark adds (ix. 36), "*and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent Me,*" to convey, that such a man shall receive a great reward, not such as is given by Christ as man, but as God. By receiving such a person, we receive Christ, whom he resembles, and as it is through the grace of God, he becomes such; hence, by receiving Him, we receive the head, who communicates His own Holy Spirit to His members. The more humble we are, the more we become assimilated to Christ, who annihilated Himself at His Incarnation, and became a little one for our sakes. "*For, a child is born to us, and a son is given to us,*" &c. (Isa. ix. 6), and the more we become like unto Christ, the more exalted shall we be in His kingdom.

6. Having shown in the preceding verses how much He values and esteems the humble, from the reward in store for those who honour and bestow benefits on them, our Redeemer now shows the same, by pointing out the heavy penalty He will

inflict on those who shall dishonour and cause them the greatest of injuries, by proving the occasion of spiritual ruin to them. "*He that shall scandalize,*" that is, shall be the occasion of spiritual ruin, in whatever way this may be effected, whether directly intended, or indirectly, by false doctrine, bad example, persuasion, contempt, or any other means, to "*one of those little ones that believe in Me.*" This shows, He refers to His humble followers, who by grace and merit, become like to little children. Nothing can be more criminal than to cause the spiritual ruin of those for whom Christ died. "*It were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged,*" &c., that is, rather than be guilty of such a crime, one should submit to any punishment or torture, however painful or ignominious, since the punishment of being drowned in the depth of the sea, or any other corporal punishment whatsoever, is nothing, in comparison with the eternal punishment in the depth of hell, which is the assured lot of him who causes the spiritual ruin of his neighbour. The sentence, as it stands, is elliptical. The words, "*rather than scandalize one of these little ones,*" should be added, as follows: "*it were better . . . and drowned in the depth of the sea, rather than scandalize one of these little ones,*" as it is read in Luke (xvii. 2). The word, "*scandalize,*" is to be taken in its usual acceptation, of causing or occasioning the spiritual ruin of our neighbour, as is clear from the following verses (8, 9). Our Divine Redeemer uses this term, rather than the word, *injure*, or *dishonour*, as the opposition to the preceding word, "*receive,*" (v. 5), would seem to demand, because this is a more general term—a term, also, of a more spiritual signification, embracing that spiritual injury which is to be deprecated most, as most grievous in the sight of God, and which He detests most, viz., the spiritual injury entailing the eternal loss of the soul. In every sin of scandal there is involved, in a certain measure, that contempt of our neighbour, against which our Redeemer cautions us (v. 10).

"*One.*" How great the crime of him who ruins and scandalizes many.

"*Of those little ones.*" The humble, who become as little children. "*Who believe in Me,*" shows, He refers to adults, represented by the little child, whom He, probably, still held in His arms. Although our Redeemer peculiarly cautions us against giving scandal to the faithful, still we are bound to avoid giving offence to all men, as St. Paul repeatedly inculcates (1 Cor. x. 32; 2 Cor. vi. 3), "*giving no offence to any one,*" &c.

"*It were better for him*" (Mark ix. 41; Luke xvii. 2). "*That a mill-stone*" (μυλος ονικος). The Vulgate has "*mola asinaria,*" referring to a heavy mill-stone, such as was turned by an ass, as contradistinguished from that turned by a man's hand; or, it may refer to the lower grinding stone, which, like the ass, bore the entire weight of the grinding work, and was termed in Greek, ὄνος. At all events, it refers to a very heavy stone. "*And drowned,*" &c. St. Jerome tells us, this was the punishment inflicted, as well among the Jews as among the Syrians, on noted criminals; among the Greeks it was the punishment of *saerilege* (Diodorus Siculus), and by its magnitude our Blessed Lord wishes to give the Jews a sensible idea of the grievous punishment reserved in hell for the sinner of scandal. The weight of the stone suspended from the neck, joined to the depth into which the criminal was flung, shows the certainty of his destruction. St. Jerome remarks, that although a general assertion, this, in a special way, applied to the Apostles, whose contention about pre-eminence might scandalize and turn aside those whom they might have been instrumental in calling to the faith. "*Si in hoc vitio permansissent, poterant eos quos ad fidem revocabant per suum scandalum perdere, dum Apostolos viderent inter se de honore pugnare.*" In St. Luke (xvii. 3) are added the words, "*take heed to yourselves,*" cautioning them against such a dreadful crime, entailing such fearful punishment.

7. Having shown the enormity of the sin of scandal from the magnitude of the punishment which awaits it, our Redeemer now points out, in general, its inevitable necessity.

"*Wo to the world,*" &c., that is, a dreadful malediction is in store for "*the world,*" including just and sinners, on account of the prevalence of scandals. The just are in danger of being carried away by the torrent, and made to deflect from the straight paths of virtue; the wicked, of becoming irrevocably immersed in vice. Hence, the caution with which it should be avoided, in consequence of the evils resulting from it, which our Lord so bitterly deplores.

"*For it must be that scandals come,*" which is more forcibly expressed by St. Luke (xvii. 1), "*It is impossible that scandals should not come.*" This expresses not an absolute, but only a consequent, or hypothetical necessity, that scandals, in general, should sometimes exist in the world, considering the malice of wicked men, the weakness of good men, the occasions of sin, and man's fatal proneness to evil. He does not say, that scandal must come in this or that case, as if it were independent of the free will of men in any particular instance; but, he expresses it in a general way, in the sense already explained, just as St. Paul tells us in a general way, and as a matter of consequent necessity, that heresies must be. (1 Cor. xi.) This is permitted by God to test His faithful servants, to render them more diligent and watchful, and to perfect their virtue, as in the case of Job, Joseph, &c., "*that they also who are approved may be made manifest among you*" (1 Cor. xi. 19). God thus draws good out of evil; He deems it better to educe good from evil, than to prevent evil from existing, "*melius judicat ex malis benefacere, quam mala nulla permittere*" (St. Augustine).

The necessity in regard to scandals taking place, referred to, by no means interferes with human liberty. The prevision of future contingent events by our Redeemer induces no necessity whatever. He foresees them in the way they are to take place; that is, freely. It is not His prescience, or prediction of evils, that causes them to exist; He foresees and predicts them, because they are infallibly to take place, and He foresees them as they are actually to take place, by the voluntary action of free agents; just, in the same way, as what we see taking place freely at present before our eyes, certainly and infallibly takes place, not because we witness it; but, we witness it, because it takes place. Our seeing it take place, by no means interferes with the perfect liberty of the free agent. So it is with God in regard to the future. With Him there is no succession of time; no past, no future. All is present. "*I am who am*" (Exod. iii. 14). It is not, says St. Chrysostom, because Christ foretold it, that scandals exist; but Christ foretold it, because He foresaw they were to exist.

8, 9. Scandal being such a dreadful evil, both in regard to him who gives it, as well as in regard to him who receives or suffers it; hence, it is, our Redeemer having pointed out the punishment which awaits the giver of scandal, now points out the punishment of him who suffers from it, or yields to it. And He earnestly exhorts us to avoid, at any cost or sacrifice, yielding to scandal. He thereby implies, that as no one is under the necessity of giving, so, neither, is there any necessity of yielding to scandal. The words of these verses cannot be understood literally, so as to warrant the destroying of any of our members, as Origen erroneously interpreted them, whose acts of self-mutilation, in order to avoid lust, the Church condemned. In no case is this allowed, since in no case is it necessary. Several meanings are given to "*hand,*" "*eye,*" "*foot,*" here, as well as in Mark (ix. 42-44). But, however piously and appropriately meant these interpretations may be, the most probable and commonly received interpretation is, that which understands them of the objects dearest

and nearest to us—pursuits most necessary and useful for us—the hand, foot, eye, being the dearest and most necessary members of our body. If these objects or pursuits, ever so dear, useful, or necessary, prove a “*scandal*,” or an occasion of sin to us, we must generously and courageously give them up, no matter what pain, sacrifice, or loss such separation may cost us; and pain and violent shock to our feelings are evidently supposed to arise sometimes from such separation in the words, “*cut it off*,” “*pluck it out*.” What operation more painful than the cutting off of our “*right hand*?” What more torturing than plucking out “*our right eye*?” and yet this is a duty of the most imperative necessity, enjoined by our merciful Redeemer, to save us from the horrors of the damned. And not only are we to submit to the torture of plucking out, the dearest and most necessary member, our right hand or our right eye; but, we must remove it altogether out of our sight, “*and cast it from thee*.”

“*It is better*,” &c. One evil or misfortune is infinitely less than the other; and if the patient submits to the knife of the surgeon, and when necessary, to the loss of one or more of his members, however painful the operation, and however great the loss it may partially entail, in order to preserve the entire body, how much more incumbent is it not on us to submit to any temporal loss, even of life itself, sooner than become, for all eternity, fuel for “*hell’s unquenchable fire*?” (Mark ix. 44.) It is a much lesser evil to forfeit the advantage which the enjoyment of the object or occasion of sin may bring us, than after enjoying it for a time, “*having two hands or two feet . . . or two eyes, to be*,” afterwards on account of it, consigned for ever to hell (see c. v. 30).

In St. Mark (ix. 42, &c.), after the words, “*the unquenchable fire of hell*,” are added the words (verses 43-47), “*where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished*.” These words are taken from the Prophet Isaias, in their *spiritual* sense, in which sense they had reference to the eternal punishment of the reprobate in hell. The words of the Prophet primarily and literally refer to the punishment to be inflicted on the Jews on account of their many prevarications against God. “*Their conquerors shall go out and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me*” (Isaias lxvi. 24). This is allusive to victors who, after satisfying their rage, go out to see the ruin of the vanquished. And to show their final and irreparable ruin, he says, “*their worm shall not die*,” &c.

Instead of the worms which are generated in the bodies of the vanquished dead, and the fire which reduces them to ashes being extinguished, the Prophet says, the punishment destined by God for the Jews is of a different kind. It shall continue without ceasing. The words are transferred by our Redeemer, in a *spiritual* sense, to express the torments of the reprobate. The “*fire*,” is understood to be undoubtedly real fire, which, by the omnipotence of God, acts upon pure spirits. And the “*worm*,” is commonly understood metaphorically, to refer to the worm of conscience, the gnawing remorses of which, coupled with a clear recollection of past sins, of graces despised, and opportunities of merit neglected, and of the nothingness of the beastly pleasures which caused their damnation, shall be the greatest torture of the damned. St. Augustine and others say, that the word may be understood literally, since the power of God could preserve these worms in fire without being ever consumed, and this is corroborated by a passage in the Book of Judith (xvi.), “*dabit ignem et vermes in carnes eorum*” (see Mark ix. 47).

St. Mark continues (ix. 48), “*For every one shall be salted with fire*.” As the property of salt is twofold—to burn and preserve; so, the fire of hell shall possess the quality of preserving the victims committed to it for ever. The words of this verse are allusive to the salting of victims offered to God, in accordance with His own ordinance (Lev. ix. 13), “*And every victim*,” &c. “*And*,” has the force of, “*as*.” They shall be

salted with fire, being victims of God's eternal justice; as, according to the Divine ordinance, every victim offered to Him in the Old Law, should be first seasoned with salt

TEXT.

10. *See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their Angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.*

11. *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

12. *What think you? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them should go astray; doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains, and goeth to seek that which is gone astray?*

13. *And if it so be that he find it: Amen I say to you, he rejoiceth more for that, than for the ninety-nine that went not astray.*

14. *Even so it is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*

COMMENTARY.

10. Our Divine Redeemer continues to exhort us to avoid scandal. The chief cause of scandal arises from either the want of respect, or from the contempt with which men practically treat the souls of their poor, humble brethren. Hence, our Redeemer cautions us against undervaluing or despising any of our brethren.

"Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones," viz., those humble followers of Me, who have become like little children, as I inculcate. For, although despised and humble here, they are highly esteemed and honoured with God, since He has been pleased to appoint His Angels, the princes of His court, who ever enjoy His presence, to be their guardians during life, and at death. This shows their great dignity with God, which man should respect, and, therefore, no one should undervalue them. Moreover, if we injure, or, by scandal despise these little ones, and ruin their souls, they have powerful defenders, or, rather, avengers, who will be accusers for them against us at the throne of God. This is the first reason assigned by our Divine Redeemer why we should not despise or scandalize our humble brethren.

From this passage, as well from several other passages of the SS. Scriptures, it is inferred, that every one among the just, every one in the state of grace, has an Angel guardian, specially appointed by God's sweet providence, to guard him during life. Indeed, as regards the just, it has never been denied by any Catholic writer, and it is so clearly laid down in SS. Scripture, and is so thoroughly in accordance with the common belief of the Church, that, although it be not defined as a *point of faith*, it may be regarded as one of the truths of *Christian doctrine*, which could not be denied by any sound Catholic. It seems also to be the more probable opinion, that an Angel guardian is appointed to watch over every human being, including unbelievers of every description. St. Bernard extols the goodness and liberality of God, in thus according us, such heavenly protectors. "O wonderful condescension! O excess of goodness and love! 'He hath given His angels charge over thee.' Who gave them charge? The Lord of Angels, whom they obey. To whom was it given? Upon His Angels, His own Angels, hath the supreme Majesty of God laid a command—upon those sublime, those happy spirits, who approach so near His Divinity—His own domestics. Of whom does He give this charge? 'Over thee.' What art thou? Is not man rottenness, corruption, the food of worms? What does He charge? 'That they guard thee, that they keep thee in all thy ways.' They even 'bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'" (Serm. 12, in Psa. xc.) The Saint (*ibidem*), points out the duty we owe our Angels guardian: "Great reverence, devotion, and confidence. *Reverence*

for his presence ; *devotion*, for his benevolence ; *confidence*, for his custody . . . in every apartment, in every closet, in every corner, pay a respect to your Angel. Dare you do before him what thou durst not commit, if I saw you ? ” &c. “ *Their Angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.* ” This shows, that wherever sent, in whatever occupation engaged, the blessed Angels enjoy the beatific vision of God, and the delights of Paradise. There are some who hold, that each of us has a wicked angel, appointed by Lucifer, the chief of demons, who imitates the providence of God in this respect, to lead us astray, and compass our ruin. This, however, is not an opinion generally received (see “Butler’s Saints,” 2nd October).

11. “ *For the Son of man,* ” &c. This is the second reason adduced to dissuade us from giving scandal, and destroying our brethren. Not only did God so value the souls of His people, as to appoint His Angels to guard them ; He even so valued them as to send His eternal Son to die for them. Who, then, can be so daring as to destroy the soul for which Christ died ? Similar is the reasoning of the Apostle (Rom. xiv. 14 ; 1 Cor. viii. 8, 9). “ *That which was lost,* ” refers to the entire human race, *lost* by sin, and doomed to everlasting punishment due to sin, had not the Son of God mercifully vouchsafed, at the sacrifice of His precious blood and life, to substitute Himself in our stead. Blessed be His eternal goodness for ever. The words convey, that it was for sinners, and on account of sinners, the Son of God came down from heaven, so that if there were no sinners, He, most probably, would not have come. “ *Non est opus valentibus medicus,* ” &c. (See ix. 13.)

12. Our Redeemer here adduces the parable of the lost sheep, which He more fully and more circumstantially details (Luke xv. 2, &c.), to show the great concern and love God has for the souls of every one of His elect, and the consequent guilt of the scandalous sinner, who opposes the earnest will of the Heavenly Father, that they should be saved, the conclusion He wishes to derive from the parable (v. 14), “ *Even so it is not the will,* ” &c. In this we find a third reason to dissuade us from giving scandal, by which, we despise our brethren, and ruin their souls. The reasons adduced by our Redeemer become stronger as He proceeds. The first is derived from the charge the Angels have of them (v. 10) ; the second, from the love which the Son of man manifested (v. 11) ; the third, from the will of the Eternal Father, to whom the lost sheep is an object of singular care, when wandering, and of singular and exceeding great joy, when found and brought back. It is not necessary to attempt to accommodate the several parts of the parable to the subject which it is intended to illustrate and enforce. It is the nature of all parables and comparisons in general, that of them some portions are intended rather for ornament and for completing the figurative allusion, in the way in which the subject of the parable commonly takes place, rather than for illustration. The scope of the writer, and his object in employing the parable or comparison, as seen from the context, is the safest criterion for ascertaining the extent of the application of the parable, and the parts of it meant for illustration. The present parable is variously interpreted. By “ *the ninety-nine sheep,* ” some understand the Angels of heaven ; and by “ *the one that went astray,* ” the human race, which our Redeemer came down from heaven to redeem. Others understand, and, more probably, “ *the ninety-nine,* ” of the just, and the straying “ *one,* ” of the sinner, who strays from the paths of virtue. Our Redeemer appeals to their own judgment, in favour of what He says, as a thing common among men. “ *What think you ?* ” As if He said : I appeal to yourselves for the truth of what I am saying.

13. Our Redeemer does not say, of the shepherd or the man in question, that he *loves* or *esteems* one more than ninety-nine; but, that he feels greater actual, present, sensible joy, on finding the *lost* "one," than he felt for the remaining "ninety-nine," that were not lost, both, because of the pain the loss caused him, and the suddenness of the pleasure, arising from finding it. Great joy is preceded by great affliction. The greater the storm on sea, the greater our joy on safely reaching land; the greater the peril of the patient, the greater the joy of his friends on his restoration and recovery. A loving father rejoices more for the recovery of his son, who was on the point of death, than for the rest of his sons who enjoyed sound health, although he loves all equally well. Men are apt to rejoice more for some new and unexpected advantage, than for all their former acquisitions, although of greater value. Our Redeemer (Luke xv. 10), speaks of the joy which "*the Angels of God*" feel on the conversion of a sinner. God Himself being immutable in His nature, is incapable of such affections.

14. The conclusion of the parable shows, the great crime of the man who gives scandal, since he opposes the will of God the Father. Our Redeemer uses not the words, "*My will*," but, "*the will of your Father*," to show, that such a man has the Father and the Son as his enemies, and that His will, and that of the Father, who sent Him, is one. "*Your Father*." Hence, you sin against your brethren, the children of your common Father, by giving scandal, and causing him to perish whom your Father wishes not to perish. He wishes all men to be saved, and none to perish, and supplies all with the necessary graces for salvation. This He wishes, by a *sincere, antecedent* wish, considering the matter absolutely and in itself, just as a prince antecedently wishes all his subjects to live, inasmuch as they are his subjects. But, by a *consequent* wish, founded on the consideration of their resisting His law, and despising His graces and friendship, God does not wish all to be saved, just as the prince referred to wishes that some of his subjects should die, if they turn traitors, and wish to subvert order in his kingdom (see St. John Damascen, Lib. 2, de Orthodoxa fide, c. 29).

The whole drift of the parable is to show, that God the Father has the greatest solicitude and concern for His children, whom He wishes to gain heaven, and feels the greatest joy at their return, just as a man diligently searches for one of his lost sheep, and rejoices on finding it.

TEXT.

15. *But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother.*

16. *And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more: that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand.*

17. *And if he will not hear them: tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.*

18. *Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.*

19. *Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning any thing whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven.*

20. *For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

21. *Then came Peter unto him and said: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

22. *Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times.*

COMMENTARY.

15. "*But if thy brother,*" &c. Having cautioned us not to sin against our brother by scandal, our Redeemer now points out our duty in regard to our brother, who may sin against us, viz., to manifest the greatest care for his salvation. He shows, that those to whom others have given scandal and offence, are bound not to wait till reparation is made, but to go and see after the spiritual wants of their erring brother, by timely correction. Among the precepts delivered on the Mount, He prescribed, that the party who did an injury to another, should at once, when convenient, make atonement; and the party injured should pardon him from his heart; but, here, He prescribes something greater, viz., that the injured party should, under due circumstances and with proper limitations, go and seek to "*gain*" his offending brother, by timely correction.

"*If thy brother shall offend against thee.*" "*Against thee,*" is understood by some to mean, *before thee, in thy presence, with thy knowledge.* This, they say, must be the meaning; because, we are bound to administer correction to all who sin against God, which we ought to regard as committed against ourselves. Nor is the duty of correction to be confined to sins injurious to ourselves. It may be also said in truth, that whosoever sins in our presence, scandalizes, and so sins against us and injures us. However, the common interpretation, which understands it of *offences against us*, seems the more probable. This is the meaning evidently of the words in St. Luke (xvii. 3, 4), "*if he do penance, forgive him.*" Hence, St. Peter subjoins the question, "*if my brother . . . and I forgive him*" (v. 21). Our Redeemer, therefore, speaks not of him who sins *in our presence*, but of him, who sins *against us*, and requires *our* forgiveness. And without excluding the private sins of our neighbour in general—since these, too, under due circumstances, entail the obligation of correction—He expressly treats only of the private sins injurious to ourselves; because, such sins are better known to us, affect us the more; and our mild correction is, therefore, the best remedy against vindictive or private retaliation. Moreover, the mild, gentle correction administered by him who received an injury, is more apt to be efficacious; since, such a man is but heaping coals upon the head of his enemy, which shall warm him into charity and repentance. Our Redeemer prescribes two things to be observed in reference to our brother who offends us—1st. To correct him, in order to procure his amendment; and 2ndly, to do that privately, "*between thee and him alone,*" that thus, while he perceives that we are consulting for his character, and anxious for his salvation, he may be the more readily moved to repentance, while, had he lost all feelings of shame and self-respect, he might remain obdurate in his sin.

"*If he shall hear thee.*" If, attending to your admonition and correction, he shall do penance. "*Thou shalt gain thy brother.*" This shows the grievous nature of the offence which calls for fraternal correction. It also points out the end of fraternal correction—the salvation of our brother. Hence, whenever this end cannot be reasonably calculated upon, the means, viz., correction, is not of obligation. From this, our Redeemer wishes us to see the union of souls, which should exist among Christians; since, every one should regard the salvation of his brother as a gain to himself—the party correcting gains his brother; and this latter gains his own soul—and hence, the loss resulting from the enmity was common, in a certain measure, to both.

16. But should your private correction prove unavailing, still, desist not. Nothing should be left undone to recover our lost brother. After the example of the kind physician, whose individual skill may prove unavailing to his patient, we must call in others. "*Take with thee one or two more,*" both for the purpose of aiding thee to induce him to enter into sentiments of true repentance, so that their joint authority may prevail upon him, the more effectually, to amend his life, which is implied in the words, "*if he will not hear thee;*" and also, that there might be a sufficient number of witnesses to give evidence to the Church of our charity and his obstinacy, which is referred to in the following words from Deuteronomy (xvii. 6; xix. 15), "*that in the mouth of two or three witnesses,*" &c.

17. If the preceding course fail to correct him, we must not give over still. "*If he will not hear them: tell the Church.*" By this, some understand, the entire of the particular congregation of the faithful—joined to their pastors—among whom the delinquent party resides, or to which he belongs. The mode of correcting a scandalous sinner adopted in the primitive Church, in accordance with this precept of our Lord, was, after private admonitions, to denounce him to the entire Church of the place; and, if he continued obstinate and contumacious, the bishop and pastors excommunicated him in presence of the entire multitude (1 Cor. v. 3-5). In course of time, it came to pass that this denunciation was only made to the bishops, who alone, from the beginning, had the power of inflicting punishment in presence of the multitude. Others, more probably, understand by "*the Church,*" the rulers and pastors of the Church. For, it is of the Church, He says, immediately afterwards (v. 18), "*whatsoever you shall bind,*" &c.; and this applies only to the Apostles and their successors, and they alone are entitled to the obedience here required, in the words, "*If he hear not the Church.*" Moreover, the perpetual usage of the Church was, to have such matters referred to the bishops and pastors only, who, whether alone or in council, represent either the particular Churches confided to them, or the universal Church. Besides, it would be against charity, and a grievous injury to our neighbour, to denounce him publicly before the multitude, for a crime which is supposed to be private and occult, in the supposition here made by our Redeemer.

"*If he will not hear the Church,*" that is, if he will not obey the prelate placed over the Church to guide and govern it, and who alone has a right to be "*heard*" and obeyed; then, this Bishop, divesting himself of the character of a Father, must exercise the function of a Judge; and by the sentence of excommunication, separate this incurable and incorrigible sinner from the body of the faithful, by whom he is no longer to be regarded in the light of a brother. This line of conduct is to be observed, in order that smarting under this correction, he may repent, "*spiritus salvus fiat*" (1 Cor. v., &c.); and not infect the flock over whom the pastor has charge.

"*Let him be to thee as the heathen,*" &c., that is, be regarded in the same light and treated in the same way, as the classes of persons referred to, were regarded and treated by the Jews, viz., shunned and avoided, and considered as outside the pale of salvation. The "*publicans,*" on account of their extortions, rapines, injustice, and oppression of the poor, were looked upon as infamous by the Jews (St. Jeromè), who altogether abstained from intercourse with the idolatrous Gentiles.

It is to be observed, with regard to the injunctions here delivered by our Divine Redeemer, regarding fraternal correction and the mode of administering

it—1st. That this being a positive precept, does not bind, under all circumstances. It only binds *when* and *where* there is a well grounded hope, that it will attain the end of such correction, viz., the amendment of the sinner. Hence, when this cannot be reasonably expected, but rather the contrary is to be apprehended, either from the dispositions of the party administering correction, or of the party to whom it is administered, correction in such circumstances is to be omitted; as then, we would be only “*casting pearls before swine.*”

2ndly. There is question here, of occult or private sins, which are injurious only to the sinner himself, or to a private individual, but tends not to the injury of the community in general. Sins of the latter description should be at once put a stop to by all legitimate means.

3rdly. It contemplates only the correction of the delinquent; it, by no means, interferes with the course of public justice in regard to criminals, at the demands of society.

4thly. We are not bound to go in search of brethren to be corrected, but only to do so when we know of it—“*against thee*”—and we should be sincerely disposed to carry out these rules prescribed by our Divine Redeemer, whenever the circumstances of time, place, persons, as well as the order of charity and prudence would require it, joined to a well-grounded hope, that our correction would prove of any avail. Nay, as the mind and intention of our Redeemer is to be attended to, rather than His words, His mind and the end He had in view being, “*thou shalt gain thy brother,*” if circumstances would warrant us in concluding, that by departing from the letter of this rule, in a particular instance, we would better attain the end of the precept, which is, to “*gain our brother,*” we could depart from it; since, the best rule for the employment of the means, is to see how far it would enable us to gain the desired end, and thus employ the means, either wholly or partially, accordingly. It is, indeed, a subject of the deepest regret, that this precept of fraternal correction, so imperatively enjoined by our Divine Redeemer, as a branch of the charity we owe our neighbour, is rarely attended to as it should, and this on the part of many on whom this precept is, in a special manner, obligatory. How many do we find neglect it from indolence and sloth—others, from a false feeling of tenderness, as if it were tenderness, and not cruelty, to abstain from pointing out to our brethren, the inextinguishable fires over which they are standing day and night, while in the state of sin—others, it is to be feared, omit it from a cowardly dread of the countenance of the mighty, or, perhaps, from a false prudence, which is but folly with God—a selfish desire of gaining the favour of the sinner, and of thus advancing their own selfish ends and interests.

18. Some commentators, Origen, Theophylact, &c., understand this verse, of the man offended by his brother, who is called upon to administer correction, thus: if you whom he has offended, shall regard him here as a “*heathen*” or a “*publican,*” he shall be regarded so, and bound as such in heaven. If you loose him, that is, pardon him after this third admonition and sentence of the Church, he shall be loosed and pardoned in heaven. But, the context clearly proves the falsity of this interpretation. For, our Redeemer, after pointing out the threefold tribunal before which our offending brother is to be brought, says, if he disobey the last, viz., the Church, or the prelate presiding over and representing the Church; then, the consequence is, that he is to be altogether excluded from civil and religious intercourse, as the result of the sentence of the Ecclesiastical authority; and He carefully distinguishes the offended party, who is bound to lay the matter before the Ecclesiastical authority from this latter authority, and says of the offender, if he

obey not the Church binding him, let him be regarded by you, "*as the heathen and the publican.*" Hence, it is one party, viz., the offended party, that referred the matter to the proper tribunal; another, that binds or looses. Speaking of the one, He uses the singular, "*shall be to thee;*" speaking of the other, the plural, "*whatsoever ye shall bind,*" &c. The words are, then, to be understood of the prelates of the Church, to whom the obstinate sinner is to be denounced, and by whom, in case of further disobedience, he is to be excommunicated. The connexion is thus quite clear. Having appointed the pastors of His Church as the last tribunal on earth, before which this contumacious sinner was to be brought, and in case of further contumacy, to be excluded by them from the society of the faithful, He adds still greater weight to their sentence, against which the obdurate sinner may be still disposed to rebel, and which he may still undervalue, by declaring, that their sentence of binding or of loosing on earth is ratified and confirmed in the high Court of heaven. He calls attention to the importance of this declaration, by prefacing it with "*Amen*"—a solemn form of asseveration employed by Him when treating of important subjects. The power of *binding* here, regards the binding in the external court of Church polity, by excommunication, to which our Redeemer directly here refers, and, also, the power of binding in the Court of Conscience and the Tribunal of Penance, where the pastors of the Church sometimes leave the sinner still unabsolved, and still bound in the chains of sin. He also adds, for the purpose of consoling the repentant, and of strengthening the timid, that whatsoever they loosed on earth, would be loosed also in heaven. The words here, in their full acceptation, embrace the power of binding and loosing in their widest extent, both in *foro externo* and in *foro interno* or the Tribunal of Penance, the same, to a certain extent, as that given to St. Peter (xvi. 19), except that the power given to Peter extends to the entire Church, including the other Apostles; whereas, the latter received no jurisdiction over Peter or over one another. In like manner, the successors of St. Peter have jurisdiction over the entire Church, including the Bishops, being appointed by our Lord to "*confirm their brethren;*" whereas, the power of binding and loosing given to each Bishop who succeeds the Apostles, is confined to the particular Church over which each may be placed, by him who has charge of the entire flock, "*lambs and sheep,*" pastors and people.

19. "*Again,*" that is, I promise you something still greater; not only will the sentence of the chiefs of My Church, the depositaries of My power, be ratified by Me, but even, "*if two of you*"—either of the Apostles, or of the faithful, who, like the Apostles, would agree from some principle of Divine charity, and with due dispositions, ask only what is good—"shall agree upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done," &c. The connexion with the preceding, according to some, is this: if two of you, agreeing among yourselves, shall obtain whatsoever you may ask, by mutual consent, how much more shall the judgment of My Church be ratified?

Others, with St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, &c., connect these words, not precisely with verse 18, immediately preceding, but with verses 15 and 16. These say, our Redeemer here refers to the blessing of concord. Having, in the preceding verses, dissuaded them from contention and disunion, by pointing out the punishment of disunion and disobedience, the source of discord, He now points out the reward of concord, so as to stimulate them, in both instances, to its practice, by threats of punishment and hopes of reward

"If two of you," is understood by some, of the Apostles; by others, of the faithful whom the Apostles represented. "*Upon earth*," on which we live here below, contrasted with heaven, the abode of God. The blessing of concord causes God in heaven to approve of what happens on earth. "*Concerning anything whatsoever*," be it great or small, easy or difficult. From the very nature of the subject, and the dispositions of those whom He addresses, our Redeemer supposes they would not petition for anything evil, but only for things conformable to His will; that they ask through His Spirit, or rather, that His Spirit asks through them. (Rom. viii.) Of course, our Redeemer's words of promise here suppose prayer vested with the necessary conditions for infallible efficacy, both as to the *matter* of petition, and *manner* of asking for it.

20. He assigns here a reason for the efficacy of the prayers of those who agree upon earth, derived from His own special presence amongst them, by His grace and assistance, on which account He renders their prayers acceptable to His Father, as if they proceeded from Himself; or, on this account, He Himself accepts their prayers, assists their efforts, and ratifies them. So that He here attributes to Himself what, in the preceding, He attributes to His Father. Others connect this with verse 18, as if it meant to prove, that whatever they shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, &c., because, He is in the midst of them, binding and loosing, as if He said: since the aid of heavenly light is necessary for the right government of the Church; therefore, if two of those, charged with the government of the Church, agree upon anything appertaining to the exercise of the keys, they shall obtain it of His Father. "*For, where there are two or three gathered together in My name*," &c., representing *His name* and power for governing the Church, "*there He is in the midst of them*," hearing their prayers, judging, decreeing with them, governing the Church with them.

By, "*in My name*," some understand, seeking My glory; others, after invoking Me in prayer. The words more probably mean, as above, gathered together with His authority, representing His person. From these words, some divines derive an argument, *a minori ad majus*, in favour of the infallibility of General Councils. If, *where a few* are assembled in the name and by the authority of Christ, He promises that special assistance, necessary for the due effect of their prayers and deliberations, how much more will He not be present in the midst of the rulers of His Church, assembled by His authority, deliberating on matters of the vastest moment, to grant them that special assistance necessary for their deliberations, which, in reference to General Councils representing the entire Church—"the pillar and ground of truth"—must imply infallibility in decreeing matters appertaining to faith and morals. (See Bellarmine Controver., Lib. 2 de Concil c. ii.)

21. What moved St. Peter to ask this question is variously accounted for. Some say, he was moved to do so, owing to our Redeemer having inculcated fraternal charity, in regard to our sinning brethren, to whom, after having done penance, He wished that pardon should be given (Luke xvii. 3). Our Redeemer, however, did not say, how often his offences were to be pardoned him; hence, St. Peter proposes this question, "*How often shall my brother offend against me?*" &c.

Others hold, that St. Peter's question was occasioned by our Redeemer's words (Luke xvii. 4), where He tells us, that if our brother sins against us seven times in a day and repent, we should forgive him. These words, being subjoined by St. Luke to the question regarding fraternal correction, it is likely they were used on this

occasion, although omitted by St. Matthew. Our Redeemer meant by "*seven*," an indefinite number; and hence, He meant to say, as often as thy brother offends thee, and repents of it, so often oughtest thou to forgive him. Peter, not well understanding what our Redeemer meant by "*seven*," whether to be used definitely or indefinitely, asks, "*how often?*" &c. "*Till seven times?*" and wishes our Redeemer to explain what precise number of times he should forgive his offending brother. Or, it might be, that these words are expressive of astonishment, on the part of Peter, at the number of times our Redeemer wished our brother's offences to be pardoned, as it would seem he was unworthy of being pardoned so often. Moreover, such excessive lenity might only seem as a further incitement to sin.

22. Our Redeemer, in the clearest possible terms, conveys what He meant, by telling us to forgive our repentant brother, not only "*seven times, but seventy times seven*," or 490 times, which is meant to express an indefinite number; so that, no matter how often our brother may sin against us, if he repents of it, we are bound to pardon him, and we should be always sincerely disposed to pardon him from our heart. But this does not imply that we are bound to forego our just rights, either in the injuries done our character or property, or, that the order of justice, or the claims of society should be set aside. It only inculcates the obligation of pardoning our brother from our heart, and of laying aside every feeling of vindictiveness and malice. The words of our Redeemer imply, that we should set no bounds to our charity towards our neighbour. To this the following parable has reference.

TEXT.

23. *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants.*

24. *And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents.*

25. *And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.*

26. *But that servant, falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

27. *And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go, and forgave him the debt.*

28. *But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him an hundred pence: and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest.*

29. *And his fellow-servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*

30. *And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*

31. *Now his fellow-servants seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came, and told their lord all that was done.*

32. *Then his lord called him; and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me:*

33. *Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?*

34. *And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers, until he should pay all the debt.*

35. *So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.*

COMMENTARY.

23-28. "*Therefore*," is interpreted by some thus, *because*; as if assigning a reason for the foregoing declaration, made to St. Peter, that we should forgive our offending brother, every time he repents. The word may, however, retain its usual meaning, thus: In order that you may understand how just and necessary it is for you always to forgive your repentant brother, know you, "*therefore*," that "*the kingdom of heaven is likened*"—rendered like by Me—"to a king," &c. It has been already observed, that this form of expression only means, that something occurs in the kingdom of heaven similar to what is expressed in the parable; for, it is not the *kingdom of heaven* that is likened to the king, &c., but it is the *King of heaven* that is strictly compared to the "*king*," referred to in the parable.

By "*the kingdom of heaven*," here, is understood, the Church, embracing the Church, militant and triumphant. In truth, it may be said to regard the entire economy or supernatural dealings of God with man. It has been already more than once observed, that in the interpretation of parables, and their application to the subject they are intended to illustrate, there are certain parts of these parables necessarily and directly intended for illustration; there are other parts that are merely *ornamental*, and introduced solely with a view of rendering the parabolical narrative complete, and in harmony with what usually occurs, without any reference to the principal subject. The ornamental parts and necessary parts can be easily seen from the context and the scope of the parable. There is no difficulty in perceiving what the scope or object of the present parable is. Our Redeemer Himself applies it in the clearest terms, "*So shall My Heavenly Father*," &c. (v. 35.) The scope of the parable, and the intention of our Blessed Lord, are, to show, that the Almighty is most merciful towards all repentant sinners; but most severe towards those who refuse to forgive their brethren their offences. Then, the necessary parts of this parable are—

First. The king, who entered into an account, and forgave the immense sum of ten thousand talents. This illustrates the infinite malice of sin, as being committed against a person of infinite dignity; and the infinite mercy of God, freely and generously, out of His infinite mercy and compassion, remitting His offending creature, this immense debt of mortal sin. A part connected with this is merely ornamental, wherein it is said that the master ordered, "*his wife*," &c. (v. 25), "*to be sold*." This is allusive to the permission among the Romans, and even among the Jews (4 Kings iv. 1), given to creditors, of selling all the effects of their debtors, even their wife and children, in discharge of the debt. In the parable, they have hardly any application, unless it be, perhaps, to show the severity of the punishment inflicted for mortal sin. But they, by no means, imply that the Almighty eternally punishes a man's wife or children, for his sins, or that any one is condemned to eternal tortures, save for his own sins. The amount contained in the "*ten thousand talents*," is disputed. However, here it is sufficient to know that it is put for a sum of indefinite magnitude, compared with the sum of "*a hundred pence*" (v. 28).

The second necessary part regards the servant, who after receiving the remission of an immense sum—"ten thousand talents"—goes forth, and throttling his fellow-servant, who owed him a mere trifle, compared with the sum remitted to himself, inexorably casts him into prison, without giving him a moment's respite or delay. This sets forth, in the clearest light, the cruelty and inhumanity of the sinner, who, after being gratuitously and mercifully forgiven his mortal sins, by his Lord and Master, and Creator, refuses forgiveness to his "*fellow-servant*," his fellow-creature, with whom he

shares the same common nature, whose weakness he knows, on whom he is often dependent for mutual aid and assistance.

31. The third part of the parable refers to the grievous sin, of which the man who refuses to forgive his neighbour, and harbours feelings of vindictiveness towards him, becomes guilty, and to the eternal punishment, which God has in store for such a sinner. The ornamental part, attached to this portion, is, when his fellow-servants complain of the cruel conduct of this servant to their master. This has hardly any application in the parable. It does not imply that the Angels or Saints of heaven accuse the unforgiving man; it is merely added for ornament sake, because this usually happens among men. It may, perhaps be intended to convey, that the Angels and just, and God Himself, are so offended at the ingratitude and cruelty of the sinner, who refuses to forgive his brother, that the most severe judgment is exercised upon him. The part wherein it is insinuated, that the former debt, remitted by God, revives (v. 34), may be also regarded as ornamental, it being natural that such would occur in cases like this, among men; but, it does not imply that sins, once remitted, ever again revive—the common opinion being, that, although our past merits revive, by penance, the guilt of sin being removed; our sins, once forgiven, do not revive, “*for the gifts of God are without repentance*” (Rom. xi. 29), unless, perhaps, it may be said, that the circumstance of receiving the remission of our former sins against God, so aggravates the sin of refusing to forgive our fellow-creature, owing to the ingratitude it contains, that it is virtually equivalent to the former sins, and shall entail as severe a punishment, as the former sins would, if still unremitted; or, at least, that the subsequent sins would be less severely punished, had the former not been forgiven. Besides the ingratitude involved in every sin of relapse, there is a special ingratitude in that of refusing to pardon our neighbour, owing to its opposition to the benefit of forgiveness, already received from God.

The first part of the parable shows us the infinite mercy and clemency of our good God towards repentant sinners. “*Being moved with compassion, he forgave him the debt*” (v. 27), viz., the immense debt of mortal sin, represented by the ten thousand talents.

The second part shows us the execrable inhumanity of some men towards their fellow-creatures.

The third, the severity of God’s judgment against such, viz., “*judgment without mercy,*” &c. (St. James ii.)

35. This is the application of the parable, by our Redeemer Himself. “*So shall My heavenly,*” &c., that is, He shall “*deliver us to the torturers till we pay all the debt*” (v. 34); that is to say, punish us eternally, since, for eternity, we can make no atonement whatever, even by the most excruciating tortures, for the infinite evil of mortal sin.

It is observed, that our Redeemer says, “*My*” (not *your*) “*Heavenly Father,*” to convey, that the man of vengeance cannot properly call God his Father, whose children he persecutes and injures.

“*Every one his brother.*” The circumstance of our neighbour being our brother, destined for the same common inheritance of glory, should move us to extend forgiveness to him.

“*From your hearts.*” It will not do to affect forgiveness externally. It must come from the “*heart,*” under pain of our being refused forgiveness by God. For the gall of hatred, our Lord wishes us to substitute the honey of charity.

This parable shows us how grievous a sin, and how hateful before God it is, to cherish rancour or hatred in our hearts, against our neighbour, who may chance to have given us offence; and how agreeable an act of sacrifice before God it is, to lay aside all such feelings, and forget all past injuries done us, as if they never took place. We have but little to forgive our neighbour, compared with what God has remitted to us. He forgave ten thousand talents; we forgive, at most, but two hundred pence. What a powerful stimulus, therefore, the consideration of all God has forgiven us, and that repeatedly, should be for us to remit from our hearts all personal insults, comparatively trifling, offered us by our neighbour.

Besides the reasons already adduced in the foregoing, to aid us in forgiving our enemies, who may have gratuitously and ungratefully injured, and are still bent on injuring us, from which our corrupt nature so strongly recoils, there are several considerations to aid us still more.

First, There is no precept more emphatically inculcated by our Lord than this (see Sermon on the Mount). We should, therefore, make every sacrifice to show our gratitude to Him, by obeying His commandments, be they ever so opposed to flesh and blood. Our enemy may not be entitled to our forgiveness. But God, our Sovereign Benefactor, for whose sake only we pardon, is.

Secondly, The prayer we every day repeat, "*forgive us . . . as we forgive,*" &c., points out our duty in this respect. We tell a lie to God, whenever, with rancour and hatred in our hearts, we address to Him, this, His own prayer.

Thirdly, The example of the Saints of old. Consider the unprovoked hostility of Saul, and his bitter, persistent, unmitigated persecutions of David, and how David, when he had him in his power, spared him. He publicly bewails his death on the mountains of Gilboe. Consider the example of Joseph—his treatment of his unnatural brethren.

Fourthly, The peace of soul, and tranquillity of conscience, produced by this victory over one's self, illustrated in the life of St. John Gualbert (July 12).

Fifthly, The dreadful consequences of harbouring feelings of vengeance. See this illustrated in the History of Sapphirus, who lost the crown of martyrdom, and denied the faith, by not pardoning Nicophorus, while the latter, owing to his spirit of forgiveness, merited the martyr's crown (Lives of Saints, 9th February).

Sixthly, Consider all God pardoned us, and how often; His countless benefits, general and particular, in consideration of which, He asks us to pardon His delinquent children. How often do we not see in the world, worthless, undeserving children pardoned, on account of their good parents?

Seventhly, The most important consideration of all—our Lord's example, pardoning His enemies, during life, and at death. He, the God of heaven, pardons offences He could not deserve. We, sinful creatures, cannot pardon our fellow-creatures, offences we richly deserved, and which we should lovingly accept from God's hands, as a trifling commutation for the eternal torments of hell, we so often merited. "*Why is earth and ashes proud?*" (Eccles. x. 9.)

Eighthly, The chief means for achieving this victory over corrupt nature, is God's grace, which is to be obtained only by fervent and persevering prayer.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of several miraculous cures performed by our Lord in Judea, whither He had come from Galilee, on His last journey to Jerusalem, at the approach of His sacred Passion (1-2). In reply to the captious questions of the Pharisees on the question of divorce, then so warmly debated by their rival schools, He points out the imperfection of the Mosaic Law, which was, of necessity, accommodated, for the avoidance of greater evils, to their hard-heartedness, and He perfects the Old Law on this subject, by establishing the indissolubility of the marriage tie, in every case, of marriage among Christian parties, once consummated (3-9). He shows a preference for continence, which is practicable, by the aid of God's grace (10-12). He imposes hands on little children presented to Him, and blesses them (13-15). He recommends a young man, who consults Him, to practise the counsels of Evangelical perfection, and takes occasion to point out the difficulty, on the part of the rich, to attain salvation, which, however difficult or impossible, considering human frailty, is still possible, with the grace and assistance of God (16-23). He points out the great reward and special privileges in store for such as renounce this world, for His sake, and the precedence to be awarded them in God's kingdom (27-30).

TEXT.

AND it came to pass when Jesus had ended these words he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan.

2. And great multitudes followed him : and he healed them there.

3. And there came to him the Pharisees tempting him, and saying : Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause ?

4. Who answering, said to them : Have ye not read, that he who made man from the beginning, "made them male and female?" And he said :

5. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh."

6. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

7. They say to him : Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce, and to put away ?

8. He saith to them : Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart permitted you to put away your wives : but from the beginning it was not so.

9. And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

10. His disciples say unto him : If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry.

11. Who said to them : All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given.

12. For there are eunuchs, who were born so from their mother's womb : and there are eunuchs, who were made so by men : and there are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it.

COMMENTARY.

1. "He departed from Galilee," probably, for the last time. Our Redeemer had often before gone up to Jerusalem, on festival days, as appears from St. John, but this journey is mentioned here specially, as it was His last before He prepared for His sacred Passion. "And came into the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan," thus verifying His promise (xvi. 21). He is preparing for His approaching death, which the Jews were planning (John vii. 1). Matthew and Mark omit here a good deal of what our Redeemer did and said, which are recorded. (John vii. 1, &c.) "Beyond the Jordan." Judea and Galilee were both "this side of the Jordan" ("cis Jordanem"), relatively to

Jerusalem. But the Jews spoke of Judea, as "*beyond the Jordan*" ("*trans Jordanem*"), retaining the form of speech used by them when coming up from Egypt. To one coming up from Egypt, Judea was, "*trans Jordanem*," the other side of the Jordan. Or, more likely, here, our Redeemer went from Capharnaum to Jerusalem, not directly, but through Perea, which was *beyond* the Jordan. This route He took, from motives of privacy, to escape public observation. The words, "*He came*," are to be construed, as is clear from the Greek of St. Mark (x. 1), not with "*the coasts of Judea*," but with "*beyond the Jordan*," which, in the Greek of Mark (*δια τοῦ περὰν τοῦ ἰορδανου*) means, "*through the (country) beyond the Jordan*."

It is most likely that the three other Evangelists who record this departure from Galilee, on His way to Jerusalem (Mark x. 1-32), follow the same order, and employ almost the same words as St. Matthew. St. Luke (ix. 51), says, "*He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*," through Samaria; and this, towards the close of His mortal career, when His Ascension was nigh; that is to say, "*when the days of His Assumption were accomplishing*." St. John (vii.), refers to His final departure from Galilee for Judea. While, on former occasions, he mentions His return to Galilee from Judea, he makes no mention whatever of it now. According to St. John, our Redeemer privately ascended to Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles (in the month of September). He afterwards remained in Judea, and proceeded to the parts beyond the Jordan, as Matthew and Mark relate—and finally, six months after, in the month of March, He entered Jerusalem in triumph, immediately before His Passion. The three Evangelists say, our Redeemer left Galilee for Judea. When? They omit mentioning. St. John says, it was at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was to celebrate that feast He came to Jerusalem. After this, He left Jerusalem; and coming to the extreme confines of Judea, He crossed the Jordan, where great multitudes followed Him.

2. When His arrival at any place became known, crowds flocked around Him, to receive instruction, and obtain the cure of such as were infirm.

"*And He healed them there*," that is, where they met Him, or, rather, beyond the Jordan. St. Mark adds—"And He taught them again, as He was accustomed to do." It was usual with our Redeemer, on performing a miracle, to deliver some point of doctrine, to which the miracle would give greater weight with the people, thus proving to them that such doctrine was of Divine origin.

3. While others were cured of their bodily distempers, and their minds enlightened by His heavenly doctrines, the Pharisees, filled with rage and envy at the glorious works and heavenly teachings of our Blessed Lord, alone remained blind and incurable. Hence, they come to Him, not for the purpose of receiving instruction; but, of "*tempting Him*," that is, involving Him, by their captious questions, with the people, or the authorities. They, therefore, propose a question much discussed at the time, viz., "*Is it lawful for a man?*" &c. If He answered in the affirmative, they would charge Him with contradicting His own teaching on the subject (c. v. 32), and bring Him into odium with the female portion of the community, for sanctioning and perpetuating the odious law of divorce; and besides, they would cast discredit on His law, as imperfect, and injurious to the stability of the marriage contract. If He answered in the negative, they would arraign Him as opposing the law of Moses, which allowed the husband to put away his wife "*for some uncleanness*" (Deut. xxiv. 1, &c.); and, moreover, it would bring Him into disfavour with many among the rich and carnal Jews, whose unrestrained licence He

would confine within just bounds. Forgetting the many times our Redeemer had put them to shame on former occasions, by turning their captious questions against themselves, and made them retire in confusion, they now propose the question so much agitated among the Jews regarding the lawfulness of divorce, and the nature of the causes which would justify it. "*For every cause.*" They do not ask, was it lawful for a man to put away his wife, for some *grave* reason. This, it would seem, was not questioned by any party among the Jews. But the question then warmly agitated between the rival schools of Hillel and Schamai was, whether *any cause*, be it ever so trifling, if the wife did not please her husband, would warrant the husband to do so; or, whether a just and lawful cause, which could be no other than adultery, was required. The school of Hillel maintained the former opinion, relying on the words of the law, "*if she hath not found favour in his eyes*" (Deut. xxiv. 1). The school of Schamai held the latter, relying on the words "*propter aliquam fœditatem,*" which they interpreted of adultery (see Dixon's "Introduction," vol. ii. p. 295).

4. Our Redeemer, in order to avoid the dilemma, in which they wished to involve Him, referred them to the law of Moses for an answer, or a decision of their case, His object being to explain to them the law touching divorce, which they had so strangely perverted from its original purpose. "*Have ye not read?*" &c. The reply of our Redeemer is recorded differently by St. Mark (x. 3). According to him, our Redeemer at once asks, what was the ordinance of Moses on the subject: "*What did Moses command you?*" and after their reply, He assigned the cause of this precept, and recalled marriage to its original institution. Here, according to St. Matthew, He first shows the indissolubility of marriage from its primeval institution; and, then, after the reply of the Pharisees regarding the ordinance of Moses, assigns the cause of that ordinance (v. 8). However, there is no real difference; since, it is quite usual with one Evangelist to narrate what was omitted by another; and the order of narrative may be different from the order in which things were done or spoken, without any detriment to the truthful accuracy of the Evangelists. St. Mark records our Redeemer's question touching the ordinance of Moses, which St. Matthew omitted; and, on the other hand, St. Matthew records the Pharisees' interrogative on the same point, which St. Mark omitted. The most probable arrangement of what occurred on this occasion would be, to place first the question proposed by our Redeemer (Mark x. 3), "*What did Moses command you?*" Then, after their answer (Mark x. 4), our Redeemer quotes an ordinance still more ancient than that of Moses, on which they so much relied—an ordinance made by God Himself from creation (Matt. xix. 4, &c.); and after this they asked Him in turn (v. 7), "*Why did Moses command to give a bill?*" &c. So, that the order of the narrative, or of events, as given in St. Matthew is to be followed, except that the question of our Redeemer (Mark x. 3), and the reply to it (v. 4), are to be prefixed to verse 4 of this chapter. It is deserving of remark, that when our Redeemer interrogates the Pharisees (Mark x. 3), He uses the word, "*command,*" while they, in reply, use the word, "*permit*" (v. 4); while in this chapter they, in their question, employ the word, "*command*" (v. 7), and He, in reply, uses the word, "*permit.*" In the questions on both sides, "*command*" is used, In the answers on both sides, "*permit*" is used. "*Command*" and "*permit*" are used thus indiscriminately, because, the ordinance relating to divorce contained a "*command*" and a "*permission.*" It *permitted* the husbands to divorce their wives on certain conditions; but it *commanded* them, in case they availed themselves of this *permission*, to grant a bill of divorce. The *permission* entailed the *command*; and the *command* involved the *permission*.

When the Pharisees quoted the ordinance of Moses (Mark x. 4), on which the custom of divorcing their wives was grounded, for this custom they could assign no cause whatever. Our Redeemer condemns this vague liberty, on several grounds. The first is founded on the designs of God, in the creation of human nature, and on the original institution of marriage. Among the faithful followers of Christ, things should be recalled to their original and perfect pattern, set before them by God Himself from the beginning. Now, the Pharisees, who boasted so much of their knowledge of SS. Scriptures, should know, that from the very creation, God made only *one* woman, and not more than *one* woman, and *one* man, in order to show us by this act, that it was not His design that man should unite to himself, either simultaneously or successively, by divorce, more than one woman; and that the marriage tie was, therefore, intended to be indissoluble. He thus proposes an older ordinance, of God Himself, to which the Mosaic ordinances should yield. "*Have you not read, that He who made man?*" "*Man,*" is not in the original Greek, which is, ὁ ποιητὰς (Vatican MS., ὁ, κτῆρας, the Creator of all things). "*From the beginning made them male and female.*" The words, "*from the beginning,*" are to be construed with, "*made them male and female,*" as in Mark (x. 6), "*from the beginning of the creation, God made them a male and a female.*"

"*And he said.*" "*He,*" may refer to God or to Adam, speaking under the influence of inspiration, whose words thus spoken are the words of God.

5. "*For this cause,*" &c. This quotation contains another reason, condemnatory of the vague, unrestrained license, with which the Jews practised divorce, founded on the strict, indissoluble union, which exists between a man and his wife, a union far more strict than any other that exists between parties, however near or dear to one another. "*She is bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*" (Gen. ii. 23). "*Therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.*" "*Shall cleave,*" that is, be most intimately united. "*And they two shall be in one flesh.*" (In the Greek, εἰς σάρκα μίαν, "*into one flesh*"', or, become "*one flesh,*" just as we say, "Adam was made *into* a living soul," that is, "*made a living soul.*" "*One flesh,*" one person, by love and carnal union—in which latter sense, St. Paul says (1 Cor. vi. 16), "*he that is joined to a harlot, is made one body*"—and by the right they mutually acquire to each other's person (1 Cor. vii. 4). *one flesh*

6. "*Therefore, now they are not two, but one flesh.*" These words show, that the phrase in the preceding verse, "*in one flesh,*" means, they become one, and *only* one flesh. It is a conclusion derived by our Redeemer from the foregoing, wherein He indirectly insinuates the pertinent conclusion, that, looking to the original institution of marriage, it is against nature itself to cause a division, or separation, in that which is one.

"*What, therefore, God hath joined together,*" &c. This is a second conclusion, directly bearing on the subject in hand, showing that divorce was not only against nature, as indirectly shown in the preceding; but, also against the positive law and ordinance of God.

"*What God hath joined together.*" "*What,*" to show they were joined together in one. "*Let not man put asunder.*" This, of course, refers to the cases of marriage established by the ordinance of God, and embraces marriage entered into in a state of sin, no less than those contracted in a state of justice, since the reason of the Divine ordinance applies equally to both. The conclusion, however, does not militate against cases not contemplated here by our Redeemer, wherein God Himself dispenses, or establishes an exception, such as the case of the Apostle (1 Cor. vii. 7),

"if the unbeliever depart, let him depart" (see Commentary on), or the case of entering into religion, "religionis ingressus ante consummatum matrimonium."

It may be, that in verses 4, 5, our Redeemer does not mean to introduce any argument against divorce, and in favour of the indissolubility of marriage; and that He merely refers to the creation of the first man and woman, and to the original institution of marriage, quoting the Scriptures having reference thereto, only with the view of pointing out the Divine origin of marriage, and the primeval ordinance regarding it, in order to serve as the basis of the twofold argument, or conclusion, established in this verse—one derived from the opposition of divorce to nature itself, in dividing, or making *two* of what is *one*; and the other, from its opposition to the original ordinance of the Creator; the former, founded on the words, "*they shall be two,*" &c.; the other, on the words, "*a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife,*" a union which God establishes, and which, therefore, man should not attempt to abolish, or put asunder.

7. The Pharisees, finding themselves unable to reply to the arguments of our Blessed Lord, derived, on the authority of SS. Scripture, from the laws of Nature and God, shelter themselves under the authority of Moses. If marriage be thus indissoluble, what sayest Thou to the ordinance of Moses, who "*commands to give a bill of divorce, and put away?*" This they object, in the hope that He would have no reply to give; or, that He might speak against Moses, and thus expose Himself to the fury of the people. The question was also a captious one, since the ordinance of Moses did not command, but only permitted, the sending away of one's wife. The only thing it commanded was, to give a bill of divorce, in case of sending her away; and this Moses did, in order to afford the repudiating husband time for deliberation, and by the difficulties and formalities which the act of repudiation, or the bill of divorce would involve, to deter men altogether from resorting to it. But, the Pharisees, who before employ the word, "*permitted*" (Mark x. 4), now use the word, "*command*," to render their objection more forcible, as if Moses could have *commanded* anything against the law of God, which our Redeemer's argument, according to them, would imply. The Pharisees confound two things, which were contained in the act of divorce; the one was the sending away one's wife. This was not commanded, but permitted. The other was the giving of a written deed, or act of repudiation, a bill of divorce. This was commanded; it was in favour of the repudiated wife, and was an obstacle to divorce.

8. Our Redeemer carefully distinguishes these two things. Moses only "*permitted*" (not commanded) them to put away their wives, nor did he ever grant this permission freely and voluntarily; He did it from a kind of necessity, "*because of the hardness of their hearts.*" He did it in condescension to the well-known obstinacy and stiff-necked perversity which would impel them to disobey, if this relaxation were not granted them, and would hurry them on to the greater excesses of either apostatizing or maltreating and killing their wives. For the prevention, then, of these greater evils, Moses *permitted* them to separate from their wives. "*Hardness of heart*" (σκληροκαρδία), is a mental obstinacy, whereby men are prevented from believing another, when suggesting what is true, or obeying him when inculcating what is good. The Jewish people were often reproached on this head. (Ezech. iii. 7; Exod. xxxii. 9, &c.) Moses, therefore, could not be quoted in favour of a practice which he merely tolerated, or *permitted*, being, as is asserted by many, in existence before his time, and this out of condescension to their obstinacy, knowing, in case it

were not permitted, greater evils would be the consequence. But this *permission* was not in accordance with the original institution of marriage, or with what took place "*from the beginning*," when men's minds were not perverted by passion, "*ab initio non fuit sic*." Hence, they should look rather to the primeval ordination of God, than to the forced permission, on the part of Moses. It was not permitted to Adam, nor to his children, to repudiate their wives. According to the account left by Moses, in Genesis (ii.), the tie of marriage was most binding; and if Moses afterwards referred to divorce, it was as a matter of necessity, and as a mere permission. By His prudent reply, our Redeemer eluded all the captious snares of His enemies. They hoped that, by quoting the ordinance of Moses, He would be forced either to make some admission, at variance with the perfection of His law, and His former teaching on the subject of divorce, or to disregard the authority of this great legislator, and censure him. He, on the other hand, vindicates the authority of His law, and His former teaching, by referring to the original law of God, as proposed in the SS. Scriptures; and, far from censuring or condemning Moses, He excuses him, and commends his prudence, and says that any fault or blame that could attach to his legislation, was imputable to the Jews themselves.

9. "*And I say to you.*" "*I*," the Legislator of the New Law, who wishes to establish marriage in its original perfection, and to recall it to the condition it had been in "*from the beginning*" (v. 8), "*that whosoever putteth away his wife (except it be for fornication), and shall marry another,*" &c. The words of this verse are often misquoted by modern infidels, against the doctrine of the Catholic Church, on the subject of the indissolubility of the marriage tie between Christians, once their marriage is consummated. It is taught by the Council of Trent (§§ xxiv. Can. vii.), and it has been the teaching, at all times, in the Church, from the beginning, that the marriage of Christians, once consummated, cannot be dissolved, save by the death of either party. This is most clearly laid down in SS. Scripture. St. Mark (x. 11), St. Luke (xvi. 18), declare this, in the most express terms, without any exception whatever. St. Paul, referring to a case where a wife goes away for just reasons, gives her no option, but to remain unmarried, or be reconciled, and return to her husband (1 Cor. vii. 11). Hence, he supposes the *vinculum* of marriage to subsist in this case (see Commentary on). The same Apostle (Rom. vii. 3) declares the woman to be an *adulteress* who marries another while her husband is alive; and this, without any exception. This would not be true, if the *vinculum*, or tie, of marriage could, in any case, be dissolved. For, though an *unmarried* party might sin, still, it would not be the sin of *adultery*. Equally explicit are his words on the same subject (1 Cor. vii. 39), "*A woman is bound by the law, as long as her husband liveth: but if her husband die, she is at liberty: let her marry to whom she will: only in the Lord.*" In these words, the Apostle clearly establishes, in the most formal manner, the indissolubility of the consummated marriage of Christians, in reply, it would seem, to the question of the Corinthians on the subject.

The same is clear from the teaching of our Redeemer in this passage. The Pharisees ask Him, if "*any cause*," light or heavy, would justify a man to send away or divorce his wife. In reply, after reminding them of the law of marriage, as it existed "*from the beginning*," and recalling it to its original perfection in His more perfect evangelical dispensation, and abolishing the practice of divorce, as it existed by Divine permission, and temporary dispensation among the Jews, He carefully distinguishes between the two things involved in the divorce among the Jews, viz., the putting away of one's wife, and the marrying another; the latter, viz.,

remarrying, He declares to be, in His new dispensation, allowable in no case whatsoever; the former, viz., putting away one's wife, He allows only in one case, viz., that of fornication, or rather of *adultery*, since there is question of a carnal sin committed by a married person, on which account the Greek word, *πορνεία* (*fornication*), is commonly understood to mean, *adultery*. "*And I say to you.*" "*I*"—the Legislator, for a more perfect and ever enduring dispensation—"say to you," in reference to the dispensation or covenant I mean to establish, whatever may have been the practice hitherto sanctioned among the Jews, or tolerated, which I now mean to displace, "*that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication,*" that is to say, this putting away of one's wife is not allowed, except in case of fornication; or, if we take the phrase, "*except it be for fornication,*" not *exceptively*, but *negatively*, after St. Augustine (*de Adulterinis Conjug.*, Lib. 1, c. ix.), it will run thus: Whosoever shall put away his wife, *when she is not guilty of adultery*, nothing being affirmed or implied in regard to putting away an adulterous wife, "*and shall marry another, committeth adultery,*" which shows the marriage tie to be still subsisting otherwise, by marrying another, whatsoever sin he might be guilty of by so doing, he would not be guilty of *adultery*. But, what renders the argument still stronger, is the following assertion, "*and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.*" Here, there is no exception whatever placed, any more than in *Mark* (x. 2), *Luke* (xvi. 18), regarding re-marriage, either of wife or husband. Our Redeemer, in the most general and unrestricted terms, declares, that the man who marries a woman put away from her husband, is guilty of adultery, which proves the marriage tie to be indissoluble. The exception, "*unless it be for fornication,*" if *exception* it be, cannot apply to the second member of the sentence, regarding re-marriage; for, if so, apart from the stimulus this would furnish to discontented parties to commit adultery, in order to re-marriage, the condition of the adulterous would be far better than that of the innocent, guiltless party; since, the latter would be deprived of the privilege of marrying again, which would be granted, in the supposition made, to the former. This has been very pointedly put by a modern writer (*Quarterly Review*, July 1857), who observes, "The re-marriages of those divorced for adulteries have been innocent; but, the re-marriages of those who had been innocent, have been adulteries." The same writer, by a very striking example, shows the utter absurdity, on syntactic or grammatical grounds, of making the exceptive clause, "*except it be for fornication,*" affect the second member of the sentence: "Whosoever shall flog his son, except it be for disobedience, and put him to death, shall be punishable by law." What should we think of the interpreter who founded on this sentence the position that a father might, for disobedience, flog his son to death? If he meant to convey that, he would have said, "*except it be for disobedience, whosoever shall flog his son, and put him to death,*" &c.; or, "*whosoever shall flog his son, and put him to death, except it be for disobedience, shall be punishable,*" &c. St. Matthew, in both passages, where he employs the exceptive clause, would be guilty of the same absurdity, if he meant this exception, as it stands, to affect the second clause relative to re-marriage. In the Catholic interpretation of the passage, which gives permission to put away the wife in case of adultery, but not to re-marry, every difficulty is removed, and the apparent contradiction between the three Evangelists at once solved and reconciled. I said in the preceding, *if exception it be*, because the words, *ἐι μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ*, "*except it be for fornication*" (which, in the Vatican MS., and in the reading adopted by Lachman, is, *παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας*—*outside the case of fornication*), are understood by some, not *exceptively*, so that, according to logical strictness, the attribute of the excepted individual case would be

the contradictory of the attribute of the general rule or proposition: but negatively, so to speak, in an *abstracted sense*, so as to mean, *apart from, or, without reference to* the case of fornication. It is thus understood by St. Augustine (Lib. 1, c. 9, de Adulterinis Conjugiis). Then the words would mean: I say, in reply to your question, it is not lawful to send away one's wife in every case. It is not lawful to send away a wife not guilty of adultery. But whether it be lawful to send even her away in case of adultery, on this case I say nothing; from this question I altogether abstract at present. In answering thus, our Redeemer would have acted very prudently. He would have fully answered their question, whether it was lawful to send away one's wife *for any cause*, by saying, it was not lawful to send her away, if she were not guilty of adultery, but whether it was, even in that case, He does not say. They were not in a position to profit by a full exposition of His doctrine on this subject; and when His hearers were not disposed, our Redeemer often refrains from a full explanation of His doctrine. Although, from what He said regarding the primeval institution of marriage, they might have inferred, that in no case was it lawful to send away one's wife, and marry another; still, He did not wish to furnish them with a pretext for calumniating Him, by saying so expressly. But, when alone, and interrogated by the Apostles privately, He makes no exception as to divorce or re-marriage (Mark x. 11, 12).

But, it may be said, if the clause be taken in a *strictly exceptive* sense, does not the permission to send away one's wife for adultery, by implication, contain a permission to re-marry? By no means. St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11) expressly commands a woman who departed from her husband, no doubt for just cause, such as adultery on his part, either to remain unmarried, or become reconciled to him. In no case does he allow her to marry again; and the Apostle says expressly in the same chapter, that in reference to the marriage rights, the husband and wife are placed on an equality in the Christian dispensation; so that, what he says of the wife equally applies to the husband regarding re-marriage.

As regards the word, *πορνεία*, which, strictly speaking, means fornication (the Greek word for adultery is, *μοιχεία*), it is commonly interpreted to mean, *adultery*, as there is question of the carnal sin of a married party. Some interpreters understand the word, of *spiritual* fornication, or heathenism, or apostasy from God, a sense the word bears (Apoc. ii. 22), *μοιχεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς*. This interpretation would involve the case referred to by St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11), which is made an exception to the law of indissolubility here promulgated, commonly termed *casus Apostoli* (see Commentary on).

The perfect agreement between the three Evangelists, as to the adultery of which either of the married parties would be guilty by re-marriage, which they express, without doubt or ambiguity, clearly establishes the Catholic doctrine on the indissolubility of the marriage tie, while either of the parties is alive. The same is expressed with equal clearness by St. Paul (Rom. vii. 2). The words of St. Mark and St. Luke must be true, independently of any restriction or extension from the words of St. Matthew. The three Evangelists wrote at different times, and for different classes of persons. Even the language used by St. Matthew, viz., the Syro-Chaldaic, was different from that employed by the two other Evangelists. We have no evidence that the Gospel of St. Matthew was known to those who first used the Gospels of the two others. Most likely it was not. Hence, it is, that any positive proposition or assertion, absolutely put forward by either of them, must be absolutely true. Although the Evangelists may differ in their narrative, one omitting what the other asserts, and *vice versa*, still, they cannot assert anything which is not true, or which

could lead to error. Then, as St. Mark and St. Luke absolutely assert, the indissolubility of the marriage tie, in every case, without exception, or giving us any clue to any such exception, and the exceptive clause mentioned by St. Matthew, is at best, but of doubtful construction (nor is it even that); the only conclusion, which common sense and common fairness would force on us is, to adhere to the doctrine unexceptionally propounded by St. Mark and St. Luke. In truth, there is no contradiction between the three Evangelists. The Catholic interpretation renders them perfectly consentient. St. Matthew alone in his narrative states, the question as to the sending away of one's wife "*for any cause.*" Hence, he alone records our Lord's reply regarding fornication, it is the only cause for divorce, *quoad mensam et cohabitationem*, that directly affects the marriage contract, the only cause that is permanent in its effects. The other causes commonly assigned for such separation, are common to marriage with other contracts. They are but temporary, and warrant a separation of the parties only while they last; while adultery, even if repented of, gives permanent ground for separation. The innocent party need not receive back the adulterous party, no matter how reformed, if he be so minded.

A question is sometimes raised in connexion with the subject of divorce, as existing among the Jews, viz., whether the giving a bill of divorce dissolved the former marriage, not only in *foro externo*, about which there is no question; but also, in *foro interno, et coram Deo*. There is no difficulty whatever as regards the external dissolution of marriage in the eyes of the Mosaic Law; for, the law supposes that the repudiated wife can marry another, and in Levit. xxi. 7, it is declared to be unlawful for the priests to marry one that was divorced, which implies, that it was lawful for others. In order to render the practice of divorce more difficult, the former husband could not again marry her whom he sent away, if she married again, which supposes the former marriage to be dissolved, and the repudiated wife contracted legal uncleanness in regard to her former husband. As regards the question referred to, it seems the more probable opinion, that a bill of divorce did actually dissolve the tie of the former marriage, *Coram Deo*. It would sound very harsh to say, after the clear and ample permission granted the Jews by God, of repudiating their wives, and of marrying again, that they committed sin in so doing, especially as it is very doubtful, before the teaching of our Lord on this subject, whether divorce was merely a *permission* or a *precept*; and even, if a mere permission, it was by no means clear that it regarded a thing in itself evil (Maldonatus). Moreover, while the Prophets often reproached the Jewish people with crimes of lesser magnitude, they never reproached them for these second marriages, of frequent occurrence among them, which would be adulterous, unless the marriage tie was dissolved.

10. His disciples, as we learn from St. Mark (x. 10), again questioned our Redeemer privately at home about this subject of divorce; and then, our Redeemer, in the clearest and most unrestricted terms declares, that, in *no case*, is it lawful for a man, after dismissing his wife, to marry another woman, or for the repudiated woman to marry another man. The disciples then say, "*If the case of a man,*" &c., if the relations of a man with his wife be so strict, that in no case can he again marry; if he be placed in the painful position of living with a wife who may prove disagreeable to him and make his life unhappy, or of having no one else; if the yoke of matrimony be so pressing and so heavy, as we know it is, since Thou hast so ordained and so declared it—the particle, "*if,*" does not imply any doubt of what our Redeemer says; it means, "*whereas, since.*" "*It is not expedient to marry,*" it is better not to engage in a state entailing such an intolerable burthen. The disciples

tacitly convey, that such a course would be opposed to the designs of God regarding the propagation of the human race.

11. Our Redeemer so prudently tempers His reply, that without condemning matrimony, as entailing the inconveniences implied by the disciples in their question, He at the same time gives the preference, absolutely speaking, to continence as a state. He says, no such inconvenience is to be apprehended, because "*all men take not this word.*" The word, "*take*" (*χωρουν*), denotes capacity, like that of a vessel to contain liquor. The words are thus interpreted by some: All do not understand or comprehend, practically, this saying, viz., "*that it is not expedient to marry*;" others, all men do not embrace, or approve and relish taking upon themselves so arduous a thing as perpetual continence, but those alone do so to whom this gift is granted by God. It is a wrong rendering of the words to say, "*all cannot take this word.*" The Greek will not admit of it, and, moreover, it is false, in a certain sense; for, all *can*, if they only pray fervently for this gift; as in the case of just men, all of them have not the gift of actual perseverance, whereby they actually do persevere in justice; but all have the gift of perseverance, in the sense that they *may* persevere if they wish. In like manner, all men have not the actual gift of continence, but they have it in *actu primo*, whereby they *may* be continent, if they sincerely wish it, by having recourse to fervent, constant prayer, mortification, flight of occasions, unceasing labour, &c. Our Redeemer here, as well as St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 7), counsels continence to all, but they would counsel nothing which was not in man's power, with the grace of God, which He prepares and offers to every one who asks it of Him (A. Lapide).

12. In order to show, that there are some to whom is given this gift of continence, which cannot, therefore, be beyond human strength, aided by God's grace, He refers to three classes of men who practise continence; and to give us an idea of who they are, to whom it is given, "*to take this word,*" and what is meant by this gift, He instances three classes of men, to the latter of whom only the words just quoted refer; and by referring to the two former classes, who are continent from necessity, He wishes to show what is the nature of continency practised by the third, which alone is a source of merit. "*For, there are eunuchs,*" &c., as if He said, there are persons to whom it is given to receive this word, viz., not those who, from nature, are incapable of coition; nor those who have been deprived of the faculty of doing so, by men; but those, who, like the former, are continent, and are such by their own free will and choice; and it is in thus voluntarily renouncing all sensual indulgence in "*making themselves eunuchs,*" that they reduce to practice this gift which comes from God alone, "*For the kingdom of heaven's sake.*" This points out the motives of voluntary continence, which are not precisely to avoid the temporal inconveniences of matrimony, or other motives equally low, such as, vain glory, human applause, as in the case of the philosophers, vestal virgins, &c., but the more easily to serve God with undivided heart (1 Cor. vii.); and, thus, the more easily to secure the possession of the kingdom of heaven. This is the meaning attached by the holy Fathers to the words, "*kingdom of heaven.*" It is the meaning contained in the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. vii.), who says, an unmarried person can devote his exclusive and undivided attention to the things of God, and his own salvation. The Apostles, in their question to our Divine Redeemer, considered the abstinence from marriage, expedient on the grounds of the heavy obligation the marriage state entailed. He proposes a still higher and more exalted spiritual motive, viz., the more easy attain-

ment of the kingdom of heaven. Of course the words of this verse can never be taken literally. The act of Origen mutilating himself in order to preserve chastity, has been condemned, and justly so. He uses the past tense *castraverunt*, "*made themselves eunuchs*," to convey to us, that he refers to those who, by one act, the act of vowing their chastity to God, become eunuchs of the King of heaven, as by one act of violence, others are made eunuchs of earthly masters, who thus have them mutilated for prudential reasons.

"*He that can receive it, let him receive*," *i.e.*, He refers not to *absolute* power; for, every one that pleases and sincerely and determinedly wishes for the gift of continence, can receive it by fervent prayer, &c. The words here mean: whosoever, free from previous matrimonial engagements, which give each party conjugal rights, wishes to practise continence, to adopt the means necessary thereunto, and after maturely considering his own strength, can prudently judge that he can practise it, after the example of this class of voluntary eunuchs whom He commends, let him do so. These words show us, that no one can practise this virtue unless God gives it, and that it is not a matter of precept, but of counsel, to such as can embrace it. These words evidently contain a counsel and encouragement to the practice of continency. St. Jerome (*contra Jovin. Lib. 1*), writes, "The Master of the games (*agonothetes*), holds forth the reward, invites us to the course, holds in hand the prize of virginity," &c. The man who can dilate and open wide his heart, and embrace this great virtue of virginity, *ὁ δυναμενος χωρειν, χωρειτω*. This is the voice of the Lord, encouraging His soldiers, and inviting them to the contest. The words, "*qui potest*," show that, aided by God's grace, celibacy is in every one's power. They denote, that celibacy is arduous, and that whosoever wishes generously to offer violence to himself, should do so and embrace it. Thus the word, "*can*," means, not the absolute, but the immediate power and will, just as a person asked to do something very arduous, would say, *I cannot, i.e.*, I do not wish or desire to do so.

TEXT.

13. *Then were little children presented to him, that he should impose hands upon them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them.*

14. *But Jesus said to them: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such.*

15. *And when he had imposed hands upon them, he departed from thence.*

COMMENTARY.

13. "*Then, were little children presented to Him.*" When this occurred is a matter of dispute. Some say, it occurred after the discourse regarding continency. But, as it would seem from St. Mark (x.), that this discourse was delivered in private, hence, others say the time cannot be precisely defined, and that, "*then*," means, *at that time*, or when He was engaged in the Gospel ministry.

"*Little children.*" St. Luke says, "*infants*," but the period of infancy might last for six or seven years; and so, both accounts perfectly agree. It may be, that among these "*little children*," infants, too, were presented. "*That He should lay His hands upon them and pray.*" The parents or nurses of these children, seeing the blessings that were conferred on all who came in contact with our Blessed Redeemer, the several cures He was pleased to perform by expelling demons, &c., were desirous of presenting their children to Him, in order that they might be freed from all harm, and from

the power of evil spirits, by the imposition of His hands, and by His prayers and benediction. It was customary with the Jews to present their little children to holy men for their blessing, which they bestowed by extending their hands over them, as we see in the case of Jacob extending his hands over the children of Joseph, and blessing them. (Gen. xlviii. 14, &c.)

"And the disciples rebuked them." They did so, from a feeling of false zeal and respect for their Master's honour, regarding it as beneath the dignity of so great a Prophet to descend from the lofty eminence of preaching the Gospel, and accommodate Himself to the trifles of children. On this account it was, that they rebuked the parents of the children, as trifling with the dignity, and unseasonably obtruding on the time of their Divine Master.

14. *"But Jesus said to them."* St. Mark (x. 14), says, *"He was much displeased"* at the conduct of His disciples, *"and said to them: Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not."* Here St. Matthew adds, *"and forbid them not to come to Me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such,"* i.e., destined for little children only, and adults who are like them, in innocence and humility of heart. Similar are the words (xviii.), *"unless you be converted and become as little children,"* &c.

St. Mark says, our Redeemer added on this occasion (x. 15), *"Amen, I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it,"* i.e., whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, or, rather, the means conducting thereto, such as the preaching of Gospel, grace, &c., with the humility of a little child, by reducing his intellect to captivity, unto the obedience of Christ, shall never enter the kingdom of God's glory. The interpretation of others (Bede), who by *"the kingdom of heaven,"* understand, the preaching of the Gospel, comes to the same. The idea is the same as that conveyed (xviii. 3). The Redeemer was displeased with the false zeal of His Apostles for His honour, and He wishes to inculcate a lesson of humility.

15. *"When He had laid His hands on them,"* thus blessing them, and most likely, He prayed for them, *"He departed,"* &c. Our Redeemer, in thus blessing these little children, the fruit of lawful wedlock, showed that, while He preferred continency, He did not condemn marriage. No doubt, this imposition of our Redeemer's hands, was replete with all spiritual and temporal benedictions, and it is to be presumed, all those little children, who were thus singularly favoured, became men eminent for sanctity. Nicephorus relates that St. Ignatius Martyr, afterwards the celebrated Bishop of Antioch, was *one* of these little children. This condescension and paternal kindness of our Blessed Lord, to these innocent little children, shows the great care we should bestow on the young; since, upon the early education of children, will depend, in a great measure, their future conduct in life. According as the twig is bent, will it grow. *"A young man, according to his way, even when he grows old, shall not depart therefrom"* (Proverbs xxii. 6).

TEXT

16. *And behold one came and said to Him: Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?*

17. *Who said to him: Why askest thou me concerning good? One is good, God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

18. *He said to him: Which? And Jesus said: "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness."*

19. *Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."*

20. *The young man saith to him: All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me?*

21. *Jesus saith to him: If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.*

22. *And when the young man had heard this word, he went away sad; for he had great possessions.*

23. *Then Jesus said to his disciples: Amen I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

24. *And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

25. *And when they had heard this, the disciples wondered very much, saying: Who then can be saved?*

26. *And Jesus beholding said to them: With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible.*

COMMENTARY.

16. "*And behold one came and said to Him.*" St. Mark (x. 17), tells us, this happened when "*He was gone forth into the way,*" from which it may be fairly inferred, that the children were blessed by Him in the house. This man, it would seem, was a man of position and of some consideration among the Jews. St. Luke (xviii. 18), calls him "*a ruler*"—*princeps* (αρχων). He was also exceedingly rich (v. 22). From St. Mark, it would also appear that he came up to our Redeemer in the most respectful way, "*kneeling before Him,*" from which circumstance, as also from the fact, that "*he went away sad*" (v. 22), after hearing our Redeemer's teaching, it is clearly inferred, that he did not come to tempt our Lord; the same is inferred from its being said, that our Redeemer "*loved him*" (Mark x. 21), owing to his candour and innocence, so different from the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, whom He hated. Hence, he is not to be confounded with the lawyer (Luke x. 25), who proposed a similar question for the purpose of tempting Him. Moreover, St. Luke himself describes them as different persons; for, he speaks of this man in chapter xviii.; of the lawyer, in chapter x.

"*Good Master.*" He employs this respectful form of address, in order to gain our Saviour's good-will. He approached our Redeemer as a great Prophet, who delivered holy instructions to the people, and cured their many diseases. Hence, he calls Him "*Master,*" who had been distinguished for doing good.

"*What good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?*" Moses proposed to us as the reward of obeying the Commandments, long life and temporal advantages, "*qui fecerit ea vivet in eis.*" Thou proposest constantly, not earthly, but heavenly blessings—not a temporal, but everlasting life. What, then, am I to do in order to gain that life?

17. Our Redeemer, seeing that this young man, however respectful and well disposed, was rather weak in faith, or, rather, had addressed Him as a mere man, distinguished for goodness and sanctity, wishes to bring him to a knowledge and faith in his Divinity, and turning the word, "*good,*" to His purpose, by employing it in a different and a more exalted signification, and giving it a meaning different from that which the young man intended—a thing not unusual with Him, as in the

phrase, "*sinite mortuos sepelire mortuos*"—He says, "*Why askest thou Me concerning good? One is good, God,*" that is, God ALONE is "*good,*" of Himself essentially good, the source of all goodness in creatures, "*non respuens bonitatis nomen si sibi hoc, tanquam Deo, deputaretur*" (St. Hilary de Trin. Lib. 9, n. 16). Our Redeemer wishes to intimate to this young man, that, in addressing Himself as "*good,*" he merely regarded Him as good in a limited sense; whereas, he should consider Him as *essentially good*, possessing, as God, that attribute of essential goodness, which belongs to God alone; that he should either believe Him to be God, or cease addressing Him by the title of "*good,*" since goodness could not be attributed to Him in any sense inferior to that applied to God. In a word, having addressed our Redeemer, as good in a human, limited, participated sense, our Lord corrects him, and wishes him to regard Himself as good in a different sense, viz., possessing essential goodness, as an attribute belonging to Him as "*true God.*" The Greek for "*good*" (*ὁ ἀγαθός*), means, "*the good BEING,*" one essentially good. The ordinary Greek has, "*Why callest thou Me good?*" Similar is the question (Mark x. 18; Luke xviii. 19), and the answer, "*one is good,*" &c., for which the other Evangelists have, "*none is good, but God,*" better suits this reading. The likelihood is, that both readings are correct; that our Redeemer replied, "*Why callest thou Me good?*" and "*Why askest thou Me concerning good?*" The young man called Him, "*Good Master,*" and asked, "*what good?*" &c., to which a twofold appropriate reply is given here. In this reply, our Redeemer teaches us, that, whenever we are commended for any good, we should refer the glory of all to God, the source of all good, in whom alone we should glory; and again, after performing the best and most deserving works, like the young man in question, we should refer them all to God. It may be, that our Redeemer wishes to remind this young man, who observed the Commandments, that he still needed faith, whereby he believed God alone to be true and good; and every man to be a liar. (Jan. Gan.)

"*But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments.*" This is the reply to the question, "*Quid boni faciam.*" The good he must do in order to gain life eternal is, to observe God's Commandments. It is remarked, that our Redeemer says, not, "*life everlasting;*" but, "*life.*" as if to convey to us, that eternal life could alone be properly called, "*life,*" the life, compared with which every temporary existence is but a kind of death. Moreover, it alone is the life, or the term for which we are all destined. The words of this verse contain a most satisfactory refutation of the doctrine of justification by faith only; since, good works, consisting in the observance of God's Commandments, in avoiding evil and doing good, of which the several applications and instances are contained in the Decalogue, are here declared by our Divine Redeemer, as necessary for obtaining eternal life.

18. *And he said to Him: Which?*" This young man, who, it is clear, from all the circumstances already referred to, approached our Redeemer, not in a captious, overbearing spirit; but, in a mild, humble manner, imagining that something new, beyond what was prescribed by the law of Moses, would be required and commanded by the New Legislator, for obtaining life eternal, asks, "*which*" Commandments did He refer to? Our Redeemer at once quotes the precepts of the second table of the Decalogue, not in order, but in such a way as to intimate to this young man, who was versed in SS. Scripture, that He referred to the moral precepts of the law of Moses. He quotes the precepts of the second table, relating to our neighbour; because, their observance, from the proper motives, involves the observance of those that regard God, "*plenitudo ergo legis est dilectio*" (Rom. xiii. 8-10; Gal. v. 14).

Moreover, the observance of the second table is for us more easy and natural; hence, our Redeemer and the Apostle conduct us from the second table of the law as more easy and natural of observance, to the first table, which is the more difficult. St. Mark adds to the negative precepts contained in this verse, "*do no fraud*" (x. 19), *μὴ ἀποστερησῆς*. This may refer to the last precept of the Decalogue, "*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,*" &c. (Exod. xx. 17); or, it may have been taken from Leviticus (xix. 13), where, instead of "*thou shalt not oppress thy neighbour by violence;*" the Hebrew means, *thou shalt not plunder*. The Septuagint has, *μὴδε ἀπτασῆς*. From the same chapter, v. 18, are taken the words of the next verse "*thou shalt love thy friend (that is to say, neighbour), as thyself.*"

19. To the several negative precepts is added, the *positive* one, "*Honour thy father,*" &c., under which is contained the precept of obeying and honouring all lawful superiors, of obeying the laws and ordinances of the Church, and of civil rulers, when in accordance with natural justice. And then, is finally, given the general precept, "*love thy neighbour as thyself,*" in which, according to St. Paul (Gal. v. 14), are recapitulated and summed up, all the precepts relating to our neighbour.

20. "*All these things I have kept from my youth.*" Some of the holy Fathers think, he told a lie, as it is clear he did not love his neighbour as himself, since he did not wish to part with his numerous possessions (St. Jerome); others think he was guilty of arrogance (St. Augustine). However, from our Redeemer's loving him, owing to the candour of his inquiries, and the sincere desire he manifested of saving his soul, as evidenced by his question, "*What yet is wanting to me?*" it is likely he observed this Commandment, as far as Jewish perfection required it, by not injuring his neighbour in any way; but not in the perfect way which Christianity required, in relieving his neighbour's wants; or, it may be said, that the fact of his having possessions (v. 22), proves nothing against him, since he might have extensive possessions, as had Abraham, and other holy men; and, still, he might observe this general precept regarding the love of his neighbour.

21. "*If thou wilt be perfect.*" In these words, our Redeemer invites him from the imperfection of legal justice, to the highest degree of Christian justice attainable in this life. He does not say, "*if thou wilt enter into life, go, sell,*" &c., because, for eternal life, the observance of the Commandments sufficed. But, as the young man, by his question, seemed to insinuate, that he was prepared for more than the observance of the Commandments, "*what still is wanting to me?*" Hence it is, that our Redeemer proposes to Him the observance of the Evangelical counsel of poverty; and tells him, that if he wished to secure eternal life with greater certainty and facility, and to be in a position to observe the Commandments more readily, he should superadd the Evangelical counsels, "*go, sell,*" &c. It might be also said, that in reference to this young man, whose heart was evidently attached inordinately to riches, our Redeemer counselled this selling of his goods, as the most effectual means of detaching him from this inordinate love of riches. It may be objected, whereas the greatest perfection of this life is charity, embracing the love of God and of our neighbour, which will securely lead us to the end of our being, viz., eternal life, what more perfection, then, can be required? No doubt, charity is the perfection of every one here below; but, the observance of the Evangelical counsels is the surest and most efficacious means towards obtaining this charity in the most perfect degree here, and for obtaining degrees of glory hereafter, proportioned to our charity and merits in this

life. According to St. Thomas (2^{da} 2^{de} Quest. 184, Article 3), perfection consists essentially in the observance of the two precepts of charity; but, it consists, secondarily and instrumentally, in the observance of the Gospel counsels, because, these help us most securely to observe the precepts of charity, and to remove all opposing obstacles and incumbrances which may be in our way, in observing God's Commandments.

"Go, sell what thou hast." This is a counsel, not a precept. From the words of this verse, St. Augustine refutes certain Pelagian heretics, who maintained, that men were bound to sell all their property and give it to the poor. For, here, this is left optional, "*si vis perfectus esse.*" It is not required for eternal life, but for Evangelical perfection. The same is also clear from St. Paul (1 Tim. vi.), who in treating of the duties of the rich, does not prescribe selling off their goods.

"And give to the poor." Get rid of your riches at once, and become free from all the cares and solitudes they entail, and distribute them, not among your relatives, as such, or rich friends—this could not be reputed an act of virtue, or perfect renunciation of riches—but, among the poor, one's poor relatives included, who will consume them without any prospect of temporal retribution.

"And thou shalt have treasure in heaven." The word, "*treasure,*" shows the exceeding great reward in store for them. By these words, our Redeemer encourages the young man to comply with the counsel He gives, assuring him that, far from losing, he shall be a gainer of riches, in superabundance. "*A treasure,*" as far exceeding worldly possessions, be they ever so great, as the heavens are exalted above the earth. "*He that hath mercy on the poor, lends to the Lord*" (Prov. xix. 17). "*In heaven,*" shows the security of these possessions; "*where thieves cannot break through nor steal,*" as also their stability and incorruptibility (St. Chrysostom in Matth. Hom. 64).

"And come, follow Me." This He adds, for fear it might be imagined, that the mere giving up of riches, would entitle one to a heavenly treasure. For many, says St. Jerome (*in hunc locum*), give up riches and follow not our Lord. The perfection, of which our Lord speaks here, consists, not in giving up riches, but in the humble following unto death and imitation of Christ, "*walking as He walked*" (1 John ii. 6), practising the virtues He practised and in the perfect union of our will with His. The renunciation of earthly goods is a very secure way, and a sure means of arriving at the perfection referred to. In this chapter, our Redeemer proposes the three principal Evangelical counsels, viz., chastity (v. 12), poverty (v. 21), and obedience, in the words, "*follow Me,*" that is, be obedient to Me and My ordinances unto death.

22. Hearing the counsel given him by our Divine Redeemer, this young man, who approached with the best dispositions, and whom our Lord Himself loved for his candour and innocence, finding this counsel too arduous, because of the thorns of riches which entangled him, in consequence of his inordinate attachment to them, he gave up his good desires, and "*went away sad.*" The abundance and love of riches did not permit him to embrace the state of perfection recommended to him by our Divine Redeemer. The more we possess of them, the more does the love of them increase. "*He had great possessions,*" to which he was inordinately attached; hence, the seed which our Blessed Lord had cast into his heart, was choked up by them (St. Jerome). Avarice tyrannizes most over those who possess most. The curse of riches is, that cupidity is inflamed in proportion to what we possess, so that the richer we are, the poorer we become, and the more our wants are increased and our desires unsatisfied.

23. "*Then Jesus said,*" &c. We are informed by St. Mark (x. 23), that, seeing the young man depart sorrowful, our Redeemer, looking around, addressed Himself to His disciples; and, lest they should regret their having voluntarily embraced poverty, "*ecce reliquimus omnia,*" &c., He availed Himself of the example of this young man, so good in every other respect, whom attachment to wealth had turned aside from the path of perfection, for which he seemed disposed, to show the danger of riches in general, and how much more secure was the state of poverty for gaining heaven. For, if this young man, who led a life of innocence, was drawn away by riches from the path of perfection, for which his former life, aided by God's grace, fitted him, what must be the difficulty for the rich in general to enter heaven, since they are not so anxious for eternal life, as this young man seemed to be for Christian perfection.

He prefixes "*Amen,*" to show the importance of what He was about to assert; "*a rich man,*" abounding in wealth and earthly possessions. SS. Mark and Luke say, "*they that have riches,*" "*will hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven,*" i.e., they shall experience much difficulty, and meet with many obstacles, arising from riches, in endeavouring to gain heaven, from which the poor are exempt.

24. We are told by St. Mark (x. 24), that the disciples showed astonishment at this expression of our Redeemer, regarding the difficulty of salvation for the rich, and that our Redeemer again said, "*how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God,*" thereby pointing out, that it was not riches, as such, that caused this great difficulty—since, among the Saints were to be found many who possessed riches, as if they possessed them not, and placed not "*their trust*" in them—but the placing on's trust in them. But, generally speaking, there are but few rich, who do not place *their trust* in riches, and indulge in the vices attendant on wealth, to the neglect of God, and the imperishable concerns of eternity. Therefore it is, that St. Paul (1 Tim. vi. 17), "*charges the rich of this world, not to trust in the uncertainty of riches,*" since one of the great evils, attendant on the possession of wealth, is to cause men to place all their hopes in this fleeting, uncertain world, to withdraw them from God, and make them undervalue the imperishable riches of His heavenly kingdom.

"*It is easier for a camel,*" &c. From the utter impossibility of an animal like a camel, passing through the eye of a needle, and the seeming absurdity of the phrase, that anything can be "*easier*" than an impossibility, some commentators say, the word, "*camel,*" means, a *cable* or *ship rope*. But the Greek word for *cable* is, not χαμηλος, as here, but χαμυλος. Others understand it, of a small gate in Jerusalem, called "*the needle's eye,*" through which a camel could pass only by stooping down, after having laid aside its burden. There is no reliable authority for asserting there was any such gate in Jerusalem. Hence, the more probable opinion is, that the word, "*camel,*" should be taken literally for the humpy animal of that name—an apt type of the rich, who are burdened with the heavy load of riches, which they must lay aside, in order to pass through the narrow gate, that leads to life; and, like the humpy animal in question, are deformed before God, when they love and place their hopes in riches. And, then, the words simply express, an adage or proverb, quite common in the East. They convey a hyperbole, or exaggeration, signifying *extreme* difficulty, amounting, almost, to an impossibility, in accomplishing a thing. Similar forms of expression are frequent in SS. Scripture. "*Sand and salt, and a mass of iron is easier to bear than a man without sense*" (Eccles. xxii. 18). This only expresses the extreme difficulty of bearing with such a man. "*It is better to meet a bear robbed of*

her whelps, than a fool trusting in his own folly" (Prov. xvii. 12). In like manner, "*If the Ethiopian can change his skin . . . you may also do well,*" &c. (Jer. xiii. 23). All these are exaggerative forms of expression, denoting a thing to be very difficult. So it is here. The phrase denotes great difficulty, but not, strictly speaking, impossibility; for, after saying (Mark x. 24; Luke xviii. 25), that it was very difficult for the rich, who trust in riches, to enter heaven, He gives, as a proof of this great difficulty, the words, "*It is easier for a camel,*" &c. If the words be taken to express impossibility, then it may be said to be impossible in this sense, that, as long as the rich man continues to confide in his riches—and the rich, in general, do confide in them—he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and it is not by any power, or natural strength of his own, but, solely, by God's grace, he can be weaned from the love of riches, and from confidence in them, so as to be fit to enter the kingdom of heaven. Although the indulgence in other vices, lust, anger, ambition, &c., may serve as an obstacle to entering heaven; still, confiding in riches, is the vice on which our Lord dwells here, because, this is a very common vice. "*From the least even to the greatest, all are given to covetousness*" (Jer. vi. 13); "*every one is turned aside after his own gain*" (Isaiah lvi. 11); "*omnes, quæ sua sunt quærunt*" (Philip. ii. 21). And, although salvation is difficult of attainment for all, poor as well as rich, just as well as sinners, for "*scarcely shall the just man be saved*" (1 Peter iv. 18); still, He refers, in a special way, to the rich, owing to the peculiar difficulties incident to riches, in regard to salvation, arising not from riches, as such—since they are given to us by God to enable us to gain heaven, by "*making to ourselves friends out of the mammon of iniquity,*" and, by liberality to the poor, to lay up for ourselves a good foundation, against the time to come, and "*lay hold on the true life*" (1 Tim. vi. 19)—but from the corrupt, and inordinate attachment to them, on which account, men hardly love God, or their neighbour, as they ought; and, moreover, the rich become immersed in pleasures and enjoyments, at variance with the law of God, placing all their hopes in this world.

25. "*The disciples wondered very much, saying*"—to which St. Mark adds—"among themselves." Although, they were themselves poor and free from the incumbrances of riches, still, they trembled for the salvation of the world, who, if they were not all rich, still had a hankering after riches; and it was their love for riches, rather than their actual possession, that made the salvation of the rich so difficult.

If, then, there be such difficulty in the way of the rich, "*Who then can be saved?*" since, there are but very few who do not covet riches, or, do not indulge in other vices, such as lust, ambition, &c.

26. In order to assuage their sorrow, our Redeemer, first, regarding them with a look of pity, and compassion (Mark x. 27), referring to the omnipotent power of God, tells them that, "*with men, this is impossible; but, with God all things are possible.*" In other words, left to his own unaided, weak, corrupt nature, it is as impossible for a rich man to enter heaven, as it would be for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; but that is not impossible for him, aided by God, since God can do all things, that can be done; and, hence, He can bring a camel through a needle's eye, by divesting him of the properties of grossness and continuous quantity, as He does in regard to the adorable body of Christ, which, in its sacramental form, is really, truly, and substantially present, in the smallest particle of the Sacred Host; which, also, after His glorious resurrection, passed through the door of the chamber, wherein the Apostles were assembled. So, in like manner, He can save the rich man; not by opening heaven to him, while continuing attached to riches, and indulging in the

vices usually attendant on them; but by changing his affections, and by making him become "*poor in spirit*," humble, charitable, detached in heart and soul. In these words, our Lord tempers the severity of the foregoing expressions, by teaching His disciples, that while they can do nothing of themselves towards attaining salvation, they should not measure their hopes of obtaining it by human infirmity, but by the power of God, on which, relying on His grace alone, they should repose all their hopes. In this passage, our Redeemer wishes to stimulate us to greater ardour and exertions, in attaining our salvation. Far from becoming despondent at the prospect before us, and the exceeding great difficulty of the work, we should rather strive, with greater eagerness, to attain it, and fly to the Divine benignity, for that aid, which alone can render its attainment possible for us.

It may be asked, if by the impossibility in which the rich are placed, of attaining heaven, is meant the impossibility, considering the natural powers of man, is not the same true of the poor as well, and mankind in general; since it is only by God's grace and assistance any one can enter heaven? True. But this is, in a particular manner, applicable to the rich, owing to the peculiar obstacles to salvation, which riches cast in their way, and the still more powerful grace of God which they, in a special manner, require, in order to surmount these obstacles; so that greater, more abundant, and more efficacious graces are required for the salvation of the rich, than for that of the poor.

TEXT.

27. *Then Peter answering, said to him: Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have?*

28. *And Jesus said to them: Amen I say to you, that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

29. *And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake: shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting.*

30. *And many that are first, shall be last: and the last shall be first.*

COMMENTARY.

27. "*Then Peter answering, said.*" "*Answering,*" is frequently used to denote, entering on, or, commencing some discourse or conversation; this is its meaning here. "*Behold we have left all, and followed Thee, what therefore shall we have?*" Some commentators say, the cause of this interrogation was; as our Redeemer had told the young man, who consulted Him, that, in order to have a treasure in heaven, he should sell all, and give it to the poor, and then follow Himself; seeing that the Apostles left all and followed Christ, without giving it to the poor, Peter wishes to know what reward was in store for the Apostles, for having given up all, and following Christ, without, however, giving it to the poor. (Jansenius Gandav., &c.) But it is more likely, as St. Jerome and others understand the passage, that Peter, on hearing the words of our Redeemer, confident that he had complied with His counsel, relative to voluntary poverty, wishes, by this question, to gladden his fellow-Apostles, and to confirm them in their holy resolution, by the prospect of the special rewards and treasure in store for them. Nor is the silence of Peter, regarding their having sold all their possessions, and given them to the poor, any proof that they did not do so. For, it is perfectly conformable to our ideas of the virtue and perfection of the Apostles, that they did give all their effects to the poor, or to their relatives, who

were poor, and in want; and this may be fairly inferred from the words of St. Peter, "*Behold, we have left all things;*" for, although, he does not say, *we sold them, and gave them to the poor*, still, it may be inferred, they did so, just as in our Redeemer's reply, no mention is made of their "*having left all,*" but only of their "*having followed Him,*" although the former is clearly implied. What the Apostles left, was indeed trifling in itself; but, in this matter, it was the feeling of love and self-denial, with which they gave up that little, and which would influence them to give up great possessions, that God regarded. It is the heart God chiefly looks to in this matter. They are pronounced blessed, who are "*poor in spirit,*" whether, in reality, rich or poor, as regards the possession of wealth. They gave up, with what they possessed, the desire of possessing more. "*Multum reliquit,*" says St. Gregory (Hom. 5 in Evang.), "*qui sibi nihil retinuit; multum reliquit, qui quantum libet parum totum deseruit.*" "*Totum mundum dimittit,*" says St. Augustine, "*qui et illud quod habet et quod habere optat, dimittit.*"

"*And followed Thee.*" Without this, giving up riches would avail nothing, since many philosophers did so. But it is the giving up of riches, with a view of following Christ, corporally, as did the Apostles; and, spiritually, by an imitation of His virtues. This it is, that entitles us to a reward. "*Secuti estis me,*" says St. Jerome, "*proprium est Apostolorum atque credentium.*"

28. "*You who have followed Me.*" He does not say, *you who have left all*, because this being the lesser, is contained in the greater act; "*who follow Me,*" says St. Jerome.

"*In the regeneration, when the Son of man,*" &c. The words, "*in the regeneration,*" are to be connected with what follows. They denote, according to the most probable opinion, the final judgment and resurrection, when the body of man shall be regenerated, and shall assume a new and glorified form, as his soul was regenerated and born anew at baptism; then, there shall be "*a new heaven and a new earth,*" and all things made new, "*ecce nova facio omnia.*"

"*When the Son of man shall sit,*" &c. When the Sovereign Judge shall come in glory, seated on the clouds of heaven, which shall be refulgent and beaming with heavenly glory and brightness. For, we are assured, the Son of God will come to judgment, seated on the clouds of heaven (xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64; Apoc. i. 7). He is said to be "*seated,*" this being the attitude suited to one pronouncing judgment. The word also designates, the superior majesty of the Sovereign Judge (xxv. 31).

"*You also shall sit on twelve seats,*" probably on bright clouds, resembling that in which the Sovereign Judge will appear, *sedebitis et vos*, implying, similar thrones to that of the Sovereign Judge.

"*Twelve thrones,*" one for each of the twelve Apostles. Our Redeemer speaks on the supposition that they shall persevere. Hence, as Judas did not persevere, the promise is not falsified in His case. Moreover, Matthias, who succeeded him in the Apostleship, succeeded also to the promise here made. Nor, is the promise confined to the twelve: those who, like the Apostles, have left all and followed Christ, shall enjoy a like privilege; but, He employs the number, twelve, because He addresses His Apostles, to whom His words were applicable, and who were at that time, twelve in number.

"*Judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" "*Judging,*" is understood by some to mean, a judgment of condemnation by contrast, as the Jewish exorcists and the Queen of the South shall condemn the unbelieving Jews (xii. 40, 41). Others say, this judgment shall consist in approving of the sentence of the Sovereign Judge. These, however, are improbable interpretations; for, the former mode of judgment is common to the very

reprobate, who shall, by contrast, condemn others; and the latter is common to all Christians. (1 Cor. vi.) Hence, the most probable meaning would seem to be, that which understands it of sitting as assessors next the throne of our Lord. Seated on refulgent thrones, they shall judge of the merits and demerits of each case, and at the instance of the Sovereign Judge, they shall pass sentence, which, by His supreme inherent authority, He shall ratify. Hence, they shall judge, not only by a sentence of approbation, which all the elect shall do, but with a certain power and authority given them by the Sovereign Judge, as the princes and chief administrators, next to Himself, in the government of His kingdom. Whether this shall be extended to others, who come after them, is not quite so clear, though by no means improbable. That it shall be granted to St. Paul, who was an Apostle, and laboured more than any other, and to St. Barnabas, seems to be generally agreed upon among commentators. In truth, by referring to *twelve*, He meant all the Apostles, among whom Paul and Barnabas are reckoned.

"*The twelve tribes of Israel*," refers to the entire Church, the true spiritual Israel of God, who succeeds to the inheritance which was first proffered to carnal Israel. Our Redeemer's mission had been confined to the Jewish people; and hence, in allusion to those to whom He preached, He speaks, under the figure of them, of the entire Church, or spiritual Israel, scattered all over the earth, embracing Gentiles as well as Jews—the *duodecim millia signati*, out of each tribe.

Some commentators understand, "*the regeneration*," not only of their judging as assessors on the last day; but also of the privileges granted them, in their own lifetime, when they are appointed princes over the entire earth, "*constitues vos principes super omnes terram*." (Psa. xlv. 17.) And, after His resurrection, which is a kind of new generation of the Eternal Son of God, "*ego hodie genui te*," or after the regeneration of the world in baptism, when He shall ascend into heaven, and sit at His Father's right hand in glory, then, they, too, shall be appointed princes of the world, seated on twelve thrones, with judicial authority, to teach and judge the entire Church, signified by "*the twelve tribes of Israel*."

Speaking of the twelve Apostles and twelve tribes, our Redeemer spoke in accommodation to those whom He was addressing, and among whom He was engaged. He was addressing His Apostles, who were in number "*twelve*," and He lived and preached among the Jews, who were reckoned by twelve tribes. And, moreover, the faithful of the New Law succeeded the Jews in their privilege as people of God; they were ingrafted as "*wild olives on Jewish trunks*."

"*The twelve tribes*," &c. He does not speak of the infidels; for, they are already judged, "*qui non credit, jam judicatus est*," although they shall appear at judgment to receive the sentence of condemnation due to their demerits and crimes.

29. Some expositors are of opinion, that this is but a repetition of the preceding promise, extended to every one, as well as to the Apostles, who shall have given up all he may prize, whether "*house or brethren*," &c. Others, with Origen, St. Jerome, &c., think that our Redeemer speaks of a less perfect class of men, who do not give up *all*, as the Apostles did, but only some of the things which men prize, whether it be "*house, or brethren, or sisters*," &c. The disjunctive, *or*, renders this opinion the more probable. "*Whosoever will give up any of these for His name's sake*," or, as St. Mark (x. 29), has it, "*for His sake and for the Gospel*." The words, "*for the Gospel*," are added, to show, that no one can act from the love of Christ, unless he fulfils the precepts of the Gospel. Therefore, reference is made to those who, rather than desert the service of Christ, and give up the practice of the Gospel precepts.

shall deprive themselves of any of the things mentioned here. The giving up of one's "wife," does not imply that the marriage tie may be dissolved, or that a man may voluntarily leave his wife, without her consent; or, that a child can voluntarily leave his parents, if they require his aid. All that is conveyed is, that if they be to us a cause of deserting the Gospel, or the occasion of sin, and of the loss of our soul; then, we can, and ought, to give them up.

"*Shall receive an hundred fold.*" What this means is disputed. From St. Mark (x. 30), "*Shall receive an hundred fold now in this time;*" and Luke (xviii. 30), "*Shall receive much more in this present time,*" it would seem to refer to the present life. The same would appear from the contrast with "*life everlasting,*" which in Luke is, "*and in the world to come, life everlasting.*" St. Jerome (Hom. Lib. 3, c. 19) understands it, of spiritual blessings, which, in point of merit, and in comparison with temporal blessings, shall—"ut si parvo numero, centenarius numerus comparetur"—so far exceed them, as an hundred exceeds one. Against this, we have St. Mark (x. 30), saying, they "*shall receive an hundred times as much now in this time, houses and brethren,*" &c. Hence, the words may be taken literally to signify, that those who give up all for Christ, shall receive an hundred for one; for the one house, Christian charity shall provide them with an hundred houses of the faithful; for the one field, the fields of hundreds shall minister to their support; for one father and mother, they shall receive an hundred fathers and mothers, who will show spiritual affection for them; wives, who, with chaste love, shall tend them, &c. Is not this verified literally in the case of religious souls, as seen from daily experience? "*Fideli,*" says St. Augustine (Ep. 89, q. 4), "*totus mundus divitiarum est.*" All that any one can enjoy of his possessions is what will supply his wants, and these are supplied by Christian charity. Our Lord adds this promise, to show that those who give up all for Him, need not be unduly solicitous about their temporal wants. St. Mark adds (x. 30), "*with persecutions,*" which is understood by some to mean, you shall receive all the foregoing blessings, in the midst of persecutions, while tyrants are persecuting you—a circumstance calculated to beget wonder—or, the words may mean, in addition to the foregoing, you shall be blessed with persecutions, and accounted worthy to suffer for Christ (Philip i. 29; Acts v. 41; 2 Tim. iii. 12). Probably, our Lord alluded to persecutions, lest we might think He promised temporal felicity or sensual delights. He promises, rather, interior consolation, peace of a good conscience, spiritual gifts, far more valuable than any temporal advantages whatsoever. Apostolic men have, then, the entire world for their possessions, "*nihil habentes, omnia possidentes.*" (1 Cor. vii.)

Others, by "*hundred fold,*" understand God Himself, who shall be to them a father and mother, &c. (xii. 49.) Others interpret it thus: that, should they be bereft of everything which this world values, still, God will bestow upon them an hundred times more peace, contentment, and happiness, than when they possessed the abundance of all things.

"*And shall possess everlasting life;*" "*in the world to come*" (Mark x. 30). Such a one shall receive "*everlasting life*" as an inheritance. No doubt, every one who shall observe God's commandments, shall gain this. But, as it is difficult to observe the commandments without the Evangelical counsels, our Redeemer, therefore, here confines the promise of eternal life to those who observe the counsels, and implies, that it shall be granted to them, in a greater and more glorious degree.

30. "*But many that are first shall be last,*" &c. Our Redeemer appropriately connects this with the foregoing. For, having opposed Himself and His doctrine to the Pharisees and to their expositions of the Old Law, He now contrasts His reward

with that received in the Old Law. In this verse, he meets a tacit objection which might arise in the minds of the Apostles against His doctrine regarding the judiciary powers and exalted pre-eminence promised them, viz.: How could it be supposed that ignorant, illiterate fishermen, could be appointed judges over the great, the learned, and wise of this world, such as the Scribes and Pharisees, and the young man who went away possessing much riches? He says, those who are reputed as of no consideration in this world, shall then be the first and most honoured; and those who seem to be great in their own estimation, "*shall be last*" in the kingdom of heaven. The word, "*last*," might be understood, as excluding them altogether. They would not be there at all, just as He said of him, who would be called "*the least in the kingdom of heaven*" (c. v. 19). The words, "*the last shall be first*," in a special manner apply to the Apostles, and to such as become poor and humble, like them, for Christ's sake. He says, "*many that are first*," &c., not *all*, because some who occupy and fill high stations here, shall also be among the first, and shall occupy the highest place in heaven; and, on the other hand, many who are of no consideration here, shall also be amongst the last in heaven, or altogether excluded from it, for their sins. Some understand the passage, of the reprobation of the Jews, the *first*, both as to vocation and the promise of the Messiah to be born of their race, and the other privileges specially enjoyed by them (see Rom. ix. 4, &c.); and of the conversion of the Gentiles, "*the last*" called to the faith, with which they were favoured only after the Jews refused and rejected it, who were in turn reprobated by God for their crimes, and above all, for the murder of the Son of God. In their place, the Gentiles were substituted, who thus became *first*, and Jews *last*. This will apply, in a special manner, to the Pharisees, who, being *first*, both in quality of Jews, and among them reputed *first*, on account of their more accurate observance of the law, were rejected for their stubbornness, and the publicans and sinners preferred.

CHAPTER XX.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Lord illustrates His assertion contained in last verse of preceding chapter, that "*many that are first shall be last, and the last first*," by the parable of the householder, who hired men at different hours of the day to labour in his vineyard, of which parable many parts are merely ornamental; and He then draws the conclusion He wished to prove and illustrate (1-16). He next foretells His Passion and Resurrection (17-19). He rebukes the sons of Zebedee, who employed their mother to ask for them priority and pre-eminence in His kingdom (20-23), and He inculcates humility, on several grounds (24-28). He restores their sight to two blind men in the neighbourhood of Jericho (29-34).

TEXT.

THE kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2. And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle.

4. And he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.

5. And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour: and did in like manner.

6. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle?

7. *They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go you also into my vineyard.*

8. *And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first.*

9. *When therefore they were come, that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.*

10. *But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more: and they also received every man a penny.*

11. *And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house.*

12. *Saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats.*

13. *But he answering one of them said: Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny?*

14. *Take what is thine, and go thy way. I will also give to this last even as to thee.*

15. *Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil, because I am good?*

16. *So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*The kingdom of heaven.*" &c. In the Greek, ὅμοια γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία, &c., it is, "*FOR, the kingdom of heaven,*" &c. It is the same in the Syriac. The main design and scope of the following parable may be clearly seen from the context, from the identity of the proposition which immediately precedes it (xix. 30), of which it is, according to the Greek—"FOR, *the kingdom of heaven,*" &c.—the demonstration or elucidation, with the conclusion deduced from it by our Divine Redeemer (v. 16). The article prefixed to "*first*" and "*last*" in the Greek, in verse 16—οἱ πρῶτοι, "*the first;*" οἱ ἔσχατοι, "*the last,*" shows, they manifestly refer to "*first*" and "*last*" (xix. 30). The parable is clearly intended to show, that, in the economy of God's providence, "*the first shall be last, and the last first,*" regarding the meaning of which words, as shall be seen hereafter, there is a great difference of opinion among commentators.

The literal meaning hardly needs any explanation. The phrase, "*The kingdom of heaven is like,*" &c., frequently means, in the Gospel, that in the economy of God's merciful dealings with His people, in His militant Church here, and in the kingdom of His glory, or Church militant hereafter, something occurs, similar to what happens when a householder goes out early, &c. For, taken literally, it is not the *kingdom*, but, rather, the *King*, or ruler of heaven, that should be compared with a householder. The several hours of the day are allusive to the division of time among the Romans and Jews. The Jews, at this period of their history, having been now subject to Rome, adopted the Roman custom of calculating time. They divided their days and nights, at all seasons of the year, into twelve hours each, which, of course, were longer or shorter at several periods of the year. The twelve hours of the night they divided into *four* watches, each watch comprising three hours, at the close of which the military guard relieved one another. In like manner, they divided the "*twelve hours of the day*" (John xi. 9) into four greater hours, or principal parts, consisting of three hours each. The first, or prime, commenced at sunrise, corresponding with our six o'clock, supposing sunrise to take place at the same hour as at the Equinox, and embraced half the space of time between sunrise and mid-day. The second, or *terce*, commenced at the end of the first three hours, nine o'clock, and ended at mid-day, or twelve o'clock. The third principal part, or *sext*, commenced at twelve o'clock, and ended at three o'clock. The fourth principal part, or *none*, commenced at the end of *sext*, and ended at six o'clock, at sunset or close of the day.

Not only were the civil duties among the Jews, but also their sacred and ecclesiastical duties, regulated by this division (Mark xv. 25).

It is at these different principal points of division of time, the householder in the parable is said to have gone forth to hire the labourers into his vineyard. At the present day, this division of time is still kept up by the Church in the office of her sacred ministers. The 118th Psalm, which, with the exception of one verse, is all employed in treating of the law of God, is thus divided in the daily recitation of the Divine office. *Prime*, began among the Jews at the commencement of the first hour of the day, or at sunrise; *terce* began at the end of the third, or a nine o'clock; *sext*, at the end of the sixth, or twelve o'clock; *none*, at the end of the ninth, or three in the afternoon. The three hours, included under *none*, closed the day at sunset, or twelfth hour, viz., six in the evening. Hence, "*the eleventh hour*" (verses 6, 9), means, one hour before sunset.

"*The kingdom of heaven*," as has been already conveyed, means, the Church militant, where men labour; and the Church triumphant, where they are rewarded.

By the "*householder*," is meant, Almighty God, the King of Heaven, who at all periods of time from creation, and at all stages of life, calls men to labour in His service. "*Labourers*," those called to serve God by the practice of good works. "*Vineyard*," the Church, which is often, in SS. Scripture, compared to a "*vineyard*" (Psa. lxxix. 9).

By the several hours of the day are meant, according to some, the several leading religious epochs—the several dispensations under which God called men to labour in His Church, and thus to reach securely the goal of salvation. According to these, the time comprised between the *first* and *third* hour, refers to the interval between Adam and Noah; from the third to the sixth, the interval between Noah and Abraham; from the sixth to the ninth, the time between Abraham and Moses; from the ninth to the eleventh, between Moses and Christ, whose religion embraces the last hour, between the eleventh and sunset. Hence, the period of the Christian dispensation is called "*the last hour*" in the Gospel, in which men receive such abundant graces and privileges, and amass such treasures of merit, compared with those living under preceding dispensations, that, although last in point of time, they are first in glory and merit; and hence, the Apostles take precedence of the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Law. Moreover, they might be termed first, because they had not to wait long, like the just of old, before entering heaven (Heb. xi. 40). These expositors understand, by "*evening*," the end of all things, when God shall come to judge the world.

Others, by the "*day*," understand, the term of man's life, during which one can work (John ix. 4), and insure his salvation; and the principal hours of the day, the period or stage of life at which men are called, and enter God's service—some, from infancy; others, from boyhood; others, in manhood; and others, in decrepid old age. These, by "*evening*," understand, the close of a man's life. The first class have to labour long and hard against the strength of youthful temptations, and the heat of their unruly passions. This latter opinion is preferred by Maldonatus, who maintains, that it is beside the scope of the parable, at what age of the world a man was called. Our Redeemer only wishes to convey, that some labour more, and acquire greater merit in a short time, than others do in a longer period; and to serve this object, it matters little at what age of the world, but only at what period of his life, he was called and entered on God's service.

It is deserving of remark, that our Redeemer supposes in the parable, that men merit eternal life; for, He speaks of an agreement to labour for a certain "*hire*,"

which implies merit. Moreover, He speaks of paying "*what is just*," which proves merit, founded, however, on God's gracious promises.

For "*penny*," the daily hire, Kenrick has "*shilling*," his rendering of "*denarius*." The value of the *denarius* is computed differently. Some say, it was nearly equal to *one shilling* of our money (Kenrick); others, to $7\frac{1}{2}d$; others, less. But, whatever may have been its value, it denotes in the parable, life eternal; and, although given the same, to all; it was only generically, but not specifically so; for, we know, the Saints enjoy different degrees of glory. (1 Cor. xv.) All the Saints enjoy in common the glory of being admitted into the kingdom, and to the beatific vision of God; as it is common to all the stars to be set in the firmament of heaven, with different degrees, however, of lustre and brightness. (1 Cor. xv.)

"*Why stand you here all the day idle? Because no one hath hired us.*" Almighty God calls men at all times. But men do not always choose to correspond with His call, or enter His service. The "*householder*" hired all whom he found in the marketplace in the first instance. This he conveys by the Prophet Jeremias. "*I have spoken to you rising early in the morning*" (Jer. vii. 13; xi. 7, 8; xxx. 11). Hence, the answer, "*because no one hath hired us*," may be regarded as an ornamental part of the parable; because, although not strictly true in the sense of the parable, it expresses the kind of false excuse which idlers generally allege; nor are householders in general supposed to be cognizant of the falsehood it expresses.

"*Evening*." The end of the world, or the close of human life. They both, practically, come to the same; since the sentence at general judgment is but a ratification of that passed at particular judgment at each one's death.

"*Steward*," refers to our Lord, who is constituted by His Father, Judge of the living and of the dead.

"*Give them their hire.*" Hence, the reward of merit. The hire given the last, far exceeding their expectations, gives us an idea of *merit*, in the Catholic sense, since the reward of merit far exceeds the intrinsic value of the act. It is from the grace and liberality of God, that our actions are meritorious, and receive so great a reward. Hence, St. Augustine says, "in crowning our merits, God crowns His own gifts."

15. The entire context of the parable clearly refutes the false conclusion deduced by heretics from the words of this verse, as if the householder said, that the reward of life eternal was utterly gratuitous, exclusive of merit. The reply of the householder is altogether ornamental, and suited to the dignity of a master in dealing with murmuring labourers, without entering into any discussion at all regarding the merits of the case. At best, the words would only prove that the value of merit and its reward flow, in the *first* instance, from the grace and gratuitous liberality of God, which every Catholic readily admits.

The word, "*evil*," applied to the murmurers, in the phrase, "*is thine eye evil?*" &c., means, *envious*, a signification of the word common among the Jews (Prov. xxiii. 6; Eccles. xxxi. 14; Mark vii. 22).

16. "*So shall the last be first*," &c. This is regarded by the generality of commentators, as the application of the parable, and as the conclusion which our Redeemer means to draw from it, identical with proposition (xix. 30). But how the application is made, is a subject about which they are much divided, according to the difference of interpretation given of "*first*" becoming "*last*;" and "*last*," "*first*" (xix. 30, and here). Nor, indeed, is it easy to see how the conclusion, and especially, the reason given for the conclusion—"for many are called, but few are chosen"—is warranted by the

parable, in which all are represented as receiving the hire or reward in equal proportions. I pass by as improbable, the opinion of St. Chrysostom, who holds, that the words of this verse are not a conclusion from the parable at all; that our Redeemer merely wishes to convey, that as the labourers all received an equal amount contrary to the expectations of all; so, something more wonderful occurs also, when "*the first*"—by whom St. Chrysostom understands, the Jews, and those Christians who fell away from the summit of perfection to the depths of spiritual misery—became "*last*;" and the "*last*"—those who arise from the depths of sin and misery, and reach the height of perfection—become "*first*." Some expositors hold, that the words are allusive to the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. Hence, according to them, by the "*first*" becoming "*last*," are meant, those who are utterly excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The words are used in this sense (Luke xiii. 30). The second conclusion, or, rather, reason assigned for the conclusion, regarding the "*first*" becoming "*last*," &c., viz.: "*For, many are called, but few are chosen*," is in favour of this interpretation; so, is the murmuring of the early workmen. Hence, according to them, the scope of the parable is to show, that the Gentile believers would be preferred, both in the Church militant here and triumphant hereafter, to the Jews who rejected Christ. Hence, the murmurs of the Jews, at seeing the Gentiles called of late to the Church, preferred to themselves, who had such claims to preference, on the ground of their early call, in the persons of the Patriarchs and their fathers at different periods, as well as on account of their labour in cultivating the vineyard with such inconveniences, and such sparing distribution of graces and helps, so abundantly dealt out to the children of the New Law. These interpreters say, that whatever has reference to this object in the parable, should be regarded as significant; whatever does not tend to illustrate this, should be regarded as ornamental. It is not easy to explain, in this opinion, how the "*penny*," the daily hire promised by the householder, is given to all the labourers; and it is in reference to "*the kingdom of heaven*" it is given. Moreover, it is given at "*evening*," that is to say, either at the close of human life, or at the end of the world. It could not, therefore, be understood of the temporal retribution given the Jews; since, among those who gained eternal life, are many faithful Jews; and besides, such temporal retribution was given during man's life—not at its close, nor at the end of the world. Hence, others say, that "*first*" and "*last*," refer to those who are saved, and receive the crown of eternal life. According to these, the scope of the parable is to show, that it matters not at what stage of human life, or period of the world, a man is called; provided he labours and co-operates more fervently and zealously, he shall gain the first place in the kingdom of heaven, in preference to those who may labour less fervently for a longer period of time. These expositors say, looking to the scope of the parable, that, the "*first*" in the order of reward are termed such, because, although called *last*, and their labour of shorter duration, it was a source of greater glory to them to be the first favoured with the reward. This was a proof of greater diligence on their part. Moreover, they received a greater reward than they expected from the liberality and beneficence of their employer, while those who imagined themselves entitled to the first place, who filled high stations in this world, and occupied prominent positions in the opinion of men, were not so much exalted in glory as the lowly and the humble. Thus, the Apostles, and other such abject and humble men, would be preferred to the great ones of the earth, and their judiciary power and exaltation would be signified by their being termed "*first*," whilst the others, over whom they would be appointed judges, would be "*last*" in comparative judgment. "*First*" and "*last*" are verified of every class of persons, and at every stage of the

world. Against this latter opinion, it will not militate, that the householder says, "*take thine own and go thy way.*" These words may be regarded as ornamental. Moreover, they refer to eternal glory in this opinion; neither will the phrase, "*thine eye is evil,*" that is, envious, illiberal, which may be also regarded as ornamental, and would, at best, only convey an idea of the magnitude of the glory which God bestows on His singularly beloved and faithful servants, calculated to make the very elect envious, if possible, or cause them to wonder at the sovereign liberality of God. While the former opinion—which understands, by "last," those excluded from everlasting bliss—accords better with the context (xix. 30), this latter opinion seems to accord better with the parable, in which all received the "*penny,*" or daily hire, in different degrees, no doubt; preference and pre-eminence being conferred on some before others. It is, however, rather difficult to see the connexion between the parable in this latter interpretation, and the second conclusion, or, rather, the reason assigned at the close, "*For, many are called, but few are chosen.*" This would naturally follow from the words of the parable understood in the former sense, which understands "last," of those rejected from the kingdom of bliss, the same with "many are called;" and "*first,*" of those who actually gain eternal life, the same with "*but few are chosen.*"

The opinion of Suarez on this point seems to be the most probable. He holds that the words, "*for many are called,*" &c., are an argument, *a fortiori*, as if our Lord meant to say: It is no wonder that of those who are called, some do not obtain the first place, although they receive life eternal; since even of those who are called, many are excluded altogether. Others explain, "*many are called,*" to the Gospel and the observance of God's Commandments; and understand "*chosen,*" of extraordinary graces, and the observance of the Evangelical counsels. And this accords well with the context (c. xix.), where those who merely observe God's Commandments, are contrasted with those who practise the Evangelical counsels, and who receive the special reward attached thereto.

This parable of the labourers is meant to convey to us a very practical and important lesson of instruction, as to the importance of eternal salvation. This can be seen—1. From the magnitude of the gain to be secured for all eternity, in case of success; and of the loss we sustain for all eternity, in case of failure. 2. From the price paid to ensure it for us, "*not corruptible gold or silver, but the precious blood of the Immaculate Lamb.*" 3. From the words of our Redeemer, declaring it to be the only thing necessary, "*porro unum est necessarium.*" Other things may be useful—friends, wealth, health, and the other goods of fortune; but, *this alone is essential.* Gain this, every other loss is gain; lose this, every other gain is loss. Other losses may be repaired; this is irreparable, unchangeable for all eternity. Let each one imagine, what should stimulate us to "*work out our salvation with fear and trembling,*" viz., that, after being presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and condemned, the *pondus æternitatis* is laid upon him; that he begins to suffer excruciating tortures, with the full knowledge of the loss of God, with the remorse of the undying worm of conscience, with the knowledge, every moment he suffers, that he is to suffer for eternity. What a dreadful thought. Let him seriously reflect on the words, EVER and NEVER. Ever to continue; never to end; then, he may estimate the importance of eternal salvation. Oh! "*What doth it avail a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*" Let him imagine he gained the whole world, enjoyed honours, pleasures, and riches, and all that his imagination could suggest, or picture to him, for the longest life—he "*gained the entire world.*" Let him imagine the other part verified, he is at the end of all this enjoyment damned—he "*suffers the loss of his*"

soul." What will his past enjoyments avail him? Yes; the recollection of them will avail to aggravate his eternal torments. There is now no further redemption. "*Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?*" (xvi. 26.) We should practically resolve on adopting the most efficacious means of securing our salvation. These are, fervent and persevering prayer; flights of the occasion of sin; frequentation of the Sacraments; a tender devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, &c.

TEXT.

17. *And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart, and said to them :*

18. *Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death.*

19. *And shall deliver him to the gentiles to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified, and the third day he shall rise again.*

COMMENTARY.

17. Here close the acts of the third year of our Redeemer's preaching. For, shortly after treating of the parable of the workmen, He raised Lazarus from the dead. This resuscitation of Lazarus occurred in the month of March, the same in which He was crucified, in the 34th year of his age. Hence, all that St. Matthew records in the following chapters, not descriptive of His Passion, took place on the eve of, or at least shortly before, His Passion, the history of which commences (xxvi. 1).

"*Going up to Jerusalem.*" We are informed by St. John (xi. 54), that, after having raised Lazarus from the dead, our Redeemer, in order to avoid the fury of the Jews, retired to the city of Ephraim, near the desert, and thence went up to Jerusalem, as is recorded here, in order to fulfil the decree of His Eternal Father, regarding His death and sufferings for the redemption of mankind.

"*Took the twelve disciples apart and said to them.*" Our Redeemer wished to make His disciples acquainted, beforehand, with the circumstances of His death and Passion, in order to confirm them in the faith, when they saw that He died freely and voluntarily, "*oblatus quia ipse voluit,*" and thus to arm them, on remembering His predictions, against the scandal of His Passion, and the shock it might otherwise naturally occasion to their faith. He informed them "*apart,*" because it was sufficient for Him to make it known to them who were to be witnesses of the accomplishment of His predictions, but He did not wish to do so publicly, lest it might interfere with the economy of redemption.

18. "*Behold,*" to arrest their attention in regard to an event which was soon to occur. Our Redeemer now foretells His Passion, for the *third* time. The nearer the period arrives, the more minutely He details its different circumstances. St. Luke (xviii. 31), informs us, that our Lord, on this occasion, referred to the necessity of fulfilling the predictions of the Prophets, regarding the Son of man.

"*We go up to Jerusalem,*" which was built on high ground.

"*The Son of man.*" He so calls Himself whenever He refers to any of the actions or modifications immediately appertaining to His human nature, as here. "*Betrayed.*" He does not say by whom. This He reserves for the Last Supper.

"*Condemn Him to death.*" When, in the hall of Caiphas, they cried out with one accord, "*He is guilty of death*" (xxvi. 66).

19. "*The Gentiles,*" viz., the Romans, Pilate and his satellites. The handing over of one to the Gentiles was regarded among the Jews as a most opprobrious

punishment (Calmet). Pilate says, "*Thy own nation, and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee up to me*" (John xviii. 35).

"*Mocked, and scourged, and crucified.*" The Jews only called for His death and crucifixion, which they had no power to inflict. "*Nobis non licet occidere quenquam.*" They did not call for His flagellation, or scornful treatment. But, this was a consequence of His having been delivered up to Pilate. Hence, "*mocked and scourged,*" only express the consequence of His being delivered up, but not the intention of the Jews, although they might be said, in a certain sense, to have intended it, inasmuch, as in their charge against Him, as mock king, they afforded grounds to have Him derided by the soldiery. This mocking of Him preceded His cruel flagellation, which they may be said to have intended, as they knew it usually preceded crucifixion. Mocking, scourging, and crucifixion were the principal parts of our Redeemer's Passion.

"*And,*" that is, *but*, "*the third day,*" &c. This He adds, to furnish grounds for consolation in the midst of the sorrows caused by His sufferings.

St. Luke (xviii. 34), adds, "*they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them.*" There is a great diversity of opinion as to the meaning of these words. It is quite clear, that the disciples understood our Lord on the several occasions He spoke of His Passion, to refer to His death. Hence, the mistaken zeal of Peter (xvi. 22). Hence, the grief which the announcement caused the Apostles on another occasion (xvii. 22). What they did not understand, were the circumstances of His Passion, its end, its consequences. While understanding Him to speak of His death, they could not understand, why He, who was the Eternal Son of God, should voluntarily, and of His own free accord, submit to sufferings which He might have escaped. They could not understand the object, or necessity, or utility of such sufferings. The wisdom of God, displayed in the economy of Redemption, was to them a mystery.

TEXT.

20. *Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of him.*

21. *Who said to her : What wilt thou ? She saith to him : Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.*

22. *And Jesus, answering, said : You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink ? They say to him : We can.*

23. *He saith to them : My chalice indeed you shall drink : but to sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.*

24. *And the ten hearing it, were moved with indignation against the two brethren.*

25. *But Jesus called them to him, and said : You know that the princes of the gentiles lord it over them : and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them.*

26. *It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister :*

27. *And he that will be first among you, shall be your servant.*

28. *Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many.*

COMMENTARY.

20. "*Then.*" Most likely, after our Lord had spoken of His approaching Passion and Resurrection on His way to Jerusalem. The word may mean, *about that time.*

"*Came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee.*" Her name was Salome (Matt. xxvii. 56 ; Mark xv. 40).

He calls her, "*the mother of the sons*," &c., rather than the wife of Zebedee, probably, because she might have been a widow at the time. Moreover, the following narrative directly concerned the sons of Zebedee, who were well known in the Gospel history. "*With her sons*," James and John, the same who were present at the Transfiguration. "*Worshipping Him*." Exhibiting profound veneration, with the view of gaining His good-will. "*And asking something*." Making a general request at first, in order to bind Him by His promise to grant the particular request she wanted. Probably, she anticipated a refusal if she mentioned, in the first place, the particular thing she wanted.

St. Mark (x. 35), says, that it was John and James themselves that addressed Him in very general terms, asking Him to grant whatsoever they would desire. However, there is no contradiction; for, they may be said to have asked themselves, what they employed their mother to ask on their behalf. It was likely, they availed themselves of their mother's good offices in this matter, thinking it might be the most successful way of obtaining their request; and if there was anything deordinate or indelicate in it, the mother's love and partiality for her children, would render it more excusable; and the claims of the mother, on the grounds of her having been among the pious females who attached themselves to our Lord (Matt. xxvii. 55, 56), they imagined to be such as to render her a most successful intercessor. Some even say, she had claims of consanguinity on our Blessed Lord. This, however, is denied by others.

21. Our Redeemer, before committing Himself to any, even general promise, wishes beforehand, to ascertain what she wanted, thereby leaving His followers an example of wisdom in such circumstances.

"*She said: Grant that these my two sons*," &c. This strange petition, on the part of this mother, was occasioned, probably, by our Redeemer having said, that in the glorious manifestation of His reign, the Apostles would sit on twelve thrones, as assessors at judgment, and from His having said, on the present occasion, that He was to rise again, three days after His death. From this they at once concluded, that His glorious reign was nigh. It was the settled impression on the minds of the Apostles, that this glorious reign which they imagined would resemble, or, rather exceed, in external pomp and show, all earthly kingdoms, was near at hand (Luke xix. 11; Acts i. 6). This accounts for the strange petition of the mother of the sons referred to here. Not unlikely, they apprehended that Peter might be preferred before them, notwithstanding the particular regard manifested towards them by our Lord. Hence, they wished to be beforehand in preferring this petition, to occupy the highest position in the new kingdom, next Himself, signified by sitting on His right and left (St. Chrysostom). It is disputed whether it was worldly pre-eminence, in His earthly kingdom, or spiritual pre-eminence, in His heavenly and eternal kingdom, they had in view. The opinion of St. Chrysostom, who maintains the former view, seems the more probable. Our Redeemer's answer, which would seem to refer to His heavenly kingdom, is perfectly reconcileable with this; for, He turns the subject from earthly to heavenly and spiritual pre-eminence. The words in St. Mark (x. 37), "*in Thy glory*," may be understood, of the glory of His temporal kingdom, which alone they seemed at this time to appreciate.

22. Our Redeemer, with His usual meekness, excuses the carnal and inordinate ambition of His two Apostles, on the ground of ignorance. Addressing themselves directly, since He knew their mother had spoken at their instance, He says, "*You know not what you ask*;" on several grounds—first, because they mistook the nature of the

kingdom in which they sought pre-eminence. They took the kingdom of our Lord for an earthly, temporal kingdom. Again, they imagined themselves fit for it with their present dispositions, whereas they should become other men in order to be fit for it. Moreover, they mistook the means for gaining pre-eminence; they imagined that our Redeemer could bestow it on whom He pleased, on the grounds of friendship or preference, as happens in earthly kingdoms, without any regard to merit. Hence, it is, that in order to correct their erroneous notions, in the two former respects, He asks, "*Can you drink?*" &c.; and He corrects the latter erroneous notion, by saying, "*Te sit on My right hand . . . is not Mine, but for whom it is prepared,*" &c.

"*Can you drink the chalice?*" &c. The word, "*chalice,*" the container for the thing contained, the portion of wine placed for each one at table, is frequently used in SS. Scripture, to denote the lot marked out for each one by Divine Providence, whether good and agreeable, as in Psalms xv. 5; xxii. 5; or bitter and evil, as in Psalms x. 7; lxxiv. 9; Isaiah li. 17-22; Jeremiah xxv. Adopting this well-known form of speech, our Redeemer asks them, "*Can you,*" are you willing and prepared, have you sufficient strength and power of endurance, "*to drink the chalice that I shall drink?*" In other words, have you strength to share in the sufferings, the ignominy, the bitter death, that I have before me, as marked out in the decrees of my Eternal Father; and thus establish some claim, on the grounds of merit, to the pre-eminence you ask for? The metaphor of the "*chalice,*" as designating man's destiny, is, according to some, derived from the ancient custom of giving men, condemned to death, a cup of poison, as in the case of Socrates; or, according to others, from the custom prevalent among the Jews, on the part of the master of the feast, of tempering the wine as he wished, and of assigning to each of his guests his portion—to some a better, to others a less desirable portion.

The Greek adds, "*and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized.*" St. Mark (x. 38), has the same in the Vulgate version. The idea, conveyed in such baptism, is the same as that conveyed in the metaphor of the chalice. It refers to His sufferings and death, as in Luke (xii. 50), "*I have a baptism,*" &c. The metaphor of baptism, designating sufferings, is, probably, owing to the prevalent notion, that waters were expressive of suffering. Thus we find (Psalms cxlii. 7), "*Libera me de aquis multis;*" also (lxxviii. 3), "*Infixus sum in profundum limo, veni in altitudinem maris et tempestas demersit me;*" also (cxxxiii. 5), "*Our soul hath passed through a torrent,*" &c.

"*They say to Him: We can.*" According to some expositors, James and John understood what our Redeemer referred to. But, having foolishly ambitioned what they knew not, now owing to their avidity to obtain it, they are prepared to accept any conditions; and forgetful of their own weakness and cowardice, of which the apprehensions they felt already on going to Jerusalem should have convinced them, they rashly assert, they are prepared for any sufferings. According to others, they knew not what our Redeemer meant, but they promised, from an impulse of ardent love, to join our Redeemer in any sufferings He might undergo.

23. "*My chalice, indeed, you shall drink.*" St. James was put to death by Herod; St. John, after being scourged, like the other Apostles, by the Jews, was cast, by the orders of Domitian, into a cauldron of boiling oil, which would have caused death, had he not been miraculously saved. He was afterwards exiled into Patmos (St. Jerome).

The words might be regarded, not so much as a prediction of future suffering, as a concession on the part of our Redeemer as if He said: "I can grant you to drink

of My chalice, but to sit at My right hand, I cannot grant you." The drinking of His chalice, and the sitting at His right hand, seem to be antithetical, the granting of one contrasted with the refusal of the other (Maldonatus).

"*But to sit at My right hand . . . is not Mine to give you.*" Some lay stress on the word "*you*," as if He said, I can give it to others who may merit it, according to the disposition of My Father, but to *you*, irrespective of merit, and in your present dispositions, I cannot give it. This interpretation would not leave the shadow of objection to the Arians against our Lord's Divinity, the comparison instituted being, not between the power of the Father and that of the Son; but, between the persons who may be worthy or unworthy to receive pre-eminence from either the Father or the Son, who always act in concert and harmony.

Although the word, "*you*," is not in the Greek; still, some of the Fathers, who adopt the Greek reading, interpret the passage in the above sense, warranted by the Vulgate (St. Chrysostom, Cyril, Theophylact, &c.), thus: it is not mine to give, after the manner or from the motives you suppose, viz., favouritism, friendship, or consanguinity.

"*But, to them for whom*," &c. The words, "*it shall be given*," or some such, are understood to complete the sense, thus: "*but it shall be given to them . . . by My Father*," whose providence has awarded it solely to merit. Our Redeemer does not say, it is not Mine to give it; but it belongs to My Father to do so. No; He only says, it is not Mine to grant it to any but those for whom it is prepared by My Father; thereby insinuating, that He was still the bestower of it; but, only on conditions determined by His Father, as in Luke xxii. 29; Apoc. iii. 21. Although all external works, such as granting the pre-eminence in question, be common to the Trinity; still, by appropriation, certain external effects are ascribed to the *several Persons* of the Trinity. *Power* to the Father; *wisdom* to the Son, &c. Hence, the granting of pre-eminence being an act of power, may, by appropriation, be attributed to the Father. "*Not mine*," might also mean, "*not mine*," as man, without reference to My Father's providence and ordination. The meaning will be quite clear, if "*but*" (αλλα) be interpreted, "*except*" (ει μη), as in Mark ix. 8; 2 Cor. ii. 5, &c.

24. Although, probably, at some distance from our Redeemer and the mother of the sons of Zebedee, the ten other Apostles understood, however, from our Redeemer's reply, what the conversation referred to; subject still to carnal affections and ambitious notions (for the Holy Ghost had not yet descended on them); they may have each of them expected for himself this pre-eminence. Our Redeemer, with His usual meekness, quietly bore with this outburst of carnal indignation without any severe expression of censure.

25. He adduces two examples of a very dissimilar nature, in order to correct their false notions and cure their pride—the one derived from the conduct of earthly princes, whose principles being quite opposite to theirs, they should not, therefore, follow or adopt; the other (v. 28), from His own conduct, whom they should imitate, as their Divinely appointed model.

"*The princes of the Gentiles*," who know not God, and, unlike the princes among the Jews, confined by the law of God within certain bounds, are governed by no law, save their own capricious wills; men, whose conduct is the opposite of what you should follow.

"*Lord it over them*." The Greek word (κατακυριευσιν) signifies, to exercise authority against "*them*," that is, the Gentile peoples subject to their control, whom

they rule tyrannically with a high hand, not for the good of their subjects, which should be the end of all authority, but for their own selfish purposes, to gain honour or emolument.

"*And they that are the greater*" (οἱ μεγάλοι), the magnates vested with power. "*Exercise power upon them,*" practise tyranny, and unlawfully domineer over their subjects. In these words, our Redeemer wishes to convey to His Apostles, that, in thus expressing indignation, arising from inordinate ambition, they are only following the perverse example of Gentile rulers. In this there is no argument against the stern exercise of authority, civil or ecclesiastical, whenever the good of the community requires it. St. Paul inculcates obedience to civil rulers, even on the grounds of conscience. (Rom. xiii.) We find the same Apostle exercising spiritual authority against a scandalous sinner. (1 Cor. v.) He also expresses His readiness to repress every disobedience, and exercise power unto edification. (2 Cor. xiii.) St. Peter exercises authority, with effect, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. What our Redeemer censures here, is the tyrannical exercise of power, with the vain display of authority, on the part of rulers, over their subjects. This is plainly denoted by the Greek, for, "*exercise power*" and "*lord it.*" It is the same that St. Peter prohibits in the rulers of the Church, in regard to their spiritual subjects (1 Peter v. 3).

26. "*It shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister.*" In these words, is conveyed a line of conduct, the opposite of what is referred to in the words of the preceding verse, "*and they that are greater, exercise power upon them.*"

27. "*And he that will be first among you . . . your servant.*" In these words is conveyed the opposite of what is conveyed in the words, "*the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them.*" The idea conveyed in vv. 26, 27, is the same. There is a great diversity of opinion as to their scope and meaning. Some, with St. Jerome, hold, that the words express the mode in which we should exercise pre-eminence and primacy, not in the Church, but in the sight of God, and this mode is, the practice of humility and submission. The more humble we are, the higher we are in God's sight. If any man wishes to be exalted, and to obtain pre-eminence in the sight of God, let him practice humility, and act as if he were the servant of others. From the whole context, however, it would rather seem, that the scope of our Lord is to show, not how pre-eminence and primacy are to be obtained, and sought for; but rather, how those who hold the first place of pre-eminence in the Church, should show and exercise the authority conferred on them. For, He places before them an example of persons who actually enjoy power, whose conduct in exercising power they should *not* imitate; and He next subjoins His own Divine example, which they should imitate, in the exercise of authority. Hence, the words mean: whosoever amongst you means to obtain pre-eminence, let him, when he obtains it, so exercise it as to be the minister and servant of all, that is, let him act with such meekness, as if those placed under him were his masters; and let him refer everything to the advantage and salvation of his people, and not to his own honour or emolument. Our Redeemer, while pointing out the manner of exercising authority and pre-eminence, employs language which would apparently apply to the manner of seeking, or, the way of arriving at power; because, this was most applicable to the circumstances of the Apostles, who ambitioned pre-eminence and power.

28. Our Redeemer proposes Himself, who was the first in His kingdom, the

prince and founder of the Ecclesiastical hierarchy, as the model whom His Apostles and all vested with power, should imitate. "*Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.*" Similar are His words (Luke xxii. 26, 27). He came not to seek His own glory, or honour, or emolument; but, the glory of His Father, and the advantage and salvation of others, going among them, doing good, ministering to their temporal and spiritual wants, with the greatest meekness and humility. And He showed how much He had the salvation and good of others at heart, when He "*gives His life,*" by undergoing the most ignominious death, "*a redemption*" (λυτρον), a ransom, a price of atonement, or redemption, which, owing to the union of the Divine Person with human nature, thus imparting infinite value to the acts performed, through His assumed nature, was not only sufficient, or abundant, but a superabundant price. By His ignominious death, He disarmed the wrath of His Father, outraged by sin, and rescued us from the power of the devil, to whom God handed us over as slaves, to be tormented. "*For many.*" The word, "*many,*" means, all mankind, who are many. St. Paul (1 Tim. ii. 6) says, "*He gave Himself a redemption for all.*" The word, "*many,*" frequently bears this meaning (v. 16; Rom. v. 19; Isa. liii.), "*multorum peccata tulit.*" And St. Paul expressly states, that Christ died for all (2 Cor. v. 14; 1 John ii. 2), "*a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.*" Or, if we take "*many*" in a limited sense, so as not to embrace all; then, the words will mean, that, although He died for all, in the sense that He wished to save all, and for this end furnished them with sufficient graces; still, this did not actually profit all unto salvation, but only the just, who persevered and died in grace. These, though not comprising all, are many.

TEXT.

29. *And when they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.*

30. *And behold two blind men sitting by the way side, heard that Jesus passed by, and they cried out, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

31. *And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying: O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on us.*

32. *And Jesus stood, and called them, and said: What wilt thou that I do to thee?*

33. *They say to him: Lord, that our eyes be opened.*

34. *And Jesus having compassion on them, touched their eyes. And immediately they saw, and followed him.*

COMMENTARY.

29. On His way from Ephraim to Jerusalem, He passed through Jericho; and great multitudes followed Him, attracted by the fame of His doctrine and miracles. Possibly, the idea that His glorious reign was nigh at hand (Luke xix. 11), might have attracted in still greater crowds those who were witnesses of the miracle He was soon to perform

30. "*And behold, two blind men,*" &c. It is generally agreed upon, that there is reference here to the same miracle recorded (Mark x. 46). St. Mark, however, speaks only of one blind man, called, *Bar-Timeus*, the son of Timeus. It is likely, He speaks of him, omitting all mention of the other, as being so well known in the country. It is a subject much disputed, whether reference is made to the same by St. Luke (xviii. 35). For, according to him, the miracle which he records took place when our Redeemer "*drew nigh to Jericho;*" whereas here, the miracle is said to have occurred when He was leaving Jericho. Hence, it is supposed by some, that

there is question of two distinct miracles. (St. Augustine, Jansenius, &c.) Others maintain, that there is reference to the same miracle here and in St. Luke; since the account is, in every respect, identical, except in the circumstance relating to the approach *to* or departure *from* Jericho; but these maintain, that the contradiction in this latter point is more apparent than real; since, it might happen, that on our Redeemer's approaching Jericho, the blind men presented themselves, and being unheeded by our Lord, they might again have presented themselves, as He was leaving, and been then cured (A. Lapide). Others reconcile both narratives, by giving the word, "*approach*," the meaning of, being *near to*, Jericho.

"*Son of David, have mercy on us.*" These blind men proclaim aloud, that they regarded Him as the promised Messiah, who was to be born of the seed of David, and whom the Jewish people were anxiously expecting, at this time, owing to the several circumstances predicted by the Prophet regarding Him, having been fulfilled. (John iv. 25; Luke iii. 15). Their minds having been interiorly enlightened by faith, they call aloud: Lord, whom we believe to be the long-expected Messiah, the son of David, Thou seest our great misery in not being able to see the sun of heaven, "*have mercy on us*," and remove our blindness. They doubt not His power. They proclaim His human nature, "*son of David*;" and His Divine nature also, "*have mercy on us.*" Confessing His Divine power, they proclaim that all He wanted was the will to cure them.

31. The crowd, who accompanied our Lord, imagining that the excessive importunity of these men might be offensive to Him, as He did not, at first, seem to attend to them; and thinking they were only asking for an ordinary alms, "*rebuked them.*" It might be, that some among the crowd felt hurt at these blind men addressing Him as "*the son of David.*" But, these cried out the louder, "*Son of David,*" &c.

32. Our Lord seemed not to attend to the cries of these blind men, at first, in order to teach us to persevere in prayer; and also to show, that He was not anxious to perform the miracle from any empty display; and by deferring its performance, He wished to render the evidence of its having taken place, the more indisputable. He, then, as if overcome by the importunity, perseverance, and strong faith of these wretched men, called them, and asked what they wanted. This He knew already; however, their answer would render the miracle less liable to cavil, by their admitting that they were blind, and wanted to have their sight restored.

33. "*Lord, that our eyes be opened,*" which Thou hast power to do, if Thou wilt, and thus, Thou shalt exhibit the signs of the Messiah, "*tunc aperientur oculi cæcorum*" (Isa. xxxv. 5).

34. "*Having compassion.*" The Greek word, *σπλαγχνιεις*, expresses inward visceral compassion, which, most likely, displayed itself in His eyes and countenance. "*He touched their eyes, and immediately they ran and followed Him,*" like the rest of the crowd; thus, giving the clearest proof of the reality of the miracle that was performed on them.

This was the fifth instance of the cure of blind men by our Redeemer. The first is recorded, Matt. ix. 27; second, Matt. xii 22; third, Mark viii. 24; fourth, John ix.; fifth, here; sixth, Matt. xxi. 14.

CHAPTER XXI.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of our Lord's triumphal entry, on Palm Sunday, into Jerusalem. The preparation He made for it, by sending two of His disciples to fetch two asses from a neighbouring village, informing them, beforehand, of what the owner of the asses would do (1-3). The fulfilment of the prophecy of Zacharias. The acclamations of the multitude, saluting Him with loud hosannas, as the son of David, the long-expected Messiah (4-9). We have next an account of the ejection of the profane traffickers out of the temple—the indignation of the Chief Priests, on witnessing our Lord's triumphal entry, and the exercise of His authority—and the rebuke administered to them by our Lord (10-16). He retires to Bethania, and on His return, on one of the following days, to Jerusalem, He curses the barren fig tree, thereby conveying, in act, a prophetic parable, indicating the rejection and reprobation of the Jewish people, who failed to produce the expected fruits of good works (17-20). He takes occasion, from the withering of the barren fig tree, to inculcate the efficacy of prayer, and of confidence in God (21-22). Being interrogated by the Chief Priests, &c., as to His authority for acting as He did. He meets their captious question, by referring them to the testimony of John the Baptist, regarding His Divine authority; and as their prevaricating answers render them unworthy of a direct reply, He declines giving one; and thus avoids the pit dug for Him (23-28). By a twofold parable, one derived from a father, who had two sons, of whom the one, although refusing obedience, first in words, obeyed afterwards, in act—the other, although promising in words, disobeyed in act (28-32); another, from a householder, who let his vineyard to husbandmen, who refused to give any return—nay, in the end, murdered his son (33-40), both which parables were clearly applicable, and applied by our Lord Himself (v. 43) to the Jews, He points out their reprobation, their final and irreparable ruin, long before foretold by the Psalmist, in punishment of their rejecting our Lord (41-42). The Chief Priests, clearly seeing the drift of these parables, and their intended application to themselves, would have laid violent hands on Him on the spot, only they feared the people. They did so, however, a few days afterwards (43-46).

TEXT.

AND when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet, then Jesus sent two disciples,

2. Saying to them : Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her : loose them and bring them to me.

3. And if any man shall say anything to you, say ye, that the Lord hath need of them : and forthwith he will let them go.

4. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying :

5. "Tell ye the daughter of Sion : Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke."

6. And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them.

7. And they brought the ass and the colt : and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon.

8. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way : and others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way :

9. And the multitudes that went before and that followed cried, saying : "Hosanna to the son of David : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord : Hosanna in the highest."

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And were come to Bethphage,*" that is, were come nigh to Bethphage, as St. Luke expresses it (xix. 29). This Bethphage was a sacerdotal village, situated, as we are informed by St. Jerome, at the foot of Mount Olivet, to the east, which mount was a mile, or, a Sabbath-day's journey from Jerusalem (Acts i. 12). St. Mark (xi. 1), says, "*they were drawing near to Jerusalem and Bethania.*" St. Luke (xix. 29), "*when He was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethania.*" We know, however, from St. John

(xii. 1-12), that our Redeemer rested the preceding evening at Bethania, which He left on the day referred to here (Palm Sunday) for Jerusalem. Hence, the words of Mark and Luke may mean: when He was near unto Bethania, which He had just left, after sleeping there the preceding evening, for Bethphage, on His way to Jerusalem. Bethania was two miles distant from Jerusalem. The Greek word, *βηθανια*, will bear this interpretation. Or, it may be said, that the Evangelists recorded these circumstances of places without any regular order, as to leaving or approaching them. Thus, when St. Mark says, "*they were drawing nigh to Jerusalem and Bethania*," or, as the Greek of St. Mark has it, "*to Jerusalem, to Bethphage, and Bethania*," Jerusalem should be placed last, being farthest off. However, the Greek word, *γγιζουσιν*, may mean, when they were nigh unto these places.

Bethphage being a sacerdotal possession, it is supposed, that the Priests brought in from it the Paschal lamb, and the other victims for the altar. Hence, the Lamb of God, of whom these were so many figures, passes through Bethphage on His way, to be immolated for the sins of the world, at Jerusalem. He also passes in triumph amidst Hosannas of joy through the Valley of Josaphat, which lay between Jerusalem and Mount Olivet, to give some idea, beforehand, of the glorious triumph He is one day to consummate, when He shall come in majesty to judge the assembled nations of the earth.

"Two disciples." Who these were cannot be fully ascertained.

"Mount Olivet," or "Mount of Olives" (*το ὄρος των ελαιων*), because, thick set with olive trees.

2. "*The village*." The Greek word (*κωμη*) shows, it could not denote Jerusalem. Moreover, Mount Olivet intervened between them and Jerusalem. "*Which is over against you*" (*την κατεναντι υμων*), means, *opposite*, in sight of you. He, probably, pointed it out to them. It may refer to Bethphage, which they were approaching, or some other village in the neighbourhood.

"And immediately"—on your entrance—"you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her." The other Evangelists only mention the "*colt, on which no man ever sat*" (Mark xi. 2; Luke xix. 30), because it was only on the colt our Redeemer rode. But, St. Matthew mentions all that occurred, and gives a full account of the matter. He speaks of the "*ass*," as well as of the "*colt*," as reference is made to both in the words of the Prophet (v. 5).

Our Redeemer departs on this occasion from His usual custom of making His journeys on foot. This He does, as son and heir of David, with the view of exhibiting on entering the metropolis of Judea, His royal power and dignity, which, unlike the exhibition of pomp on the part of earthly potentates, was still blended with that great meekness and humility, which so well accorded with His first coming amongst us, and the spiritual kingdom He came to establish. His kingly power and character were manifested in the fact of the owners of the asses giving them up, at the mere expression of His will, to the Apostles, whom He informed beforehand of the several circumstances connected with the entire event; in the applause, with which He was received, notwithstanding the prohibition on the part of the Pharisees, that any one should confess Him to be the Christ; in His curing the lame and the blind on entering the temple; and in His having cast out the profane traffickers, which inspired His enemies with terror. At the same time, He wished this royal pomp to be tempered with humility. This was exhibited in all the circumstances of His triumphal entrance—the animal on which He rode—the description of persons who accompanied Him and paid Him homage—the poor and lowly, not the great or noble—

the humble trappings, consisting of the garments of the poor, which covered the animal on which He sat, to show that His kingdom was not earthly, but of another order—spiritual and heavenly. All this was circumstantially described beforehand by the Prophet, so that the Apostles and the Jewish people might acknowledge Him in the midst of all this outward humility, as their promised, long-expected Messiah. It was not without some mystical reason our Redeemer selected the tenth day of the first month for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This was the day on which the Jews were commanded to take, each, home the Paschal lamb, to be immolated on the evening of the 14th day. Hence, the true Paschal Lamb, by whom we were to be liberated from the dominion of the infernal Pharaoh, enters Jerusalem on this day. It was on the octave of this day He was to rise triumphant from the grave, the conqueror of death and hell, and to inaugurate His heavenly reign. Hence, on this day, He gives a faint outline, in His triumphal entry, of what that spiritual and heavenly kingdom was to be. It was also on the 10th day of the first month that Josue, who, both in his name and office, was a type of our Divine Redeemer, introduced the Israelites into the promised land; and, on the 14th, celebrated the solemn feast of the Pasch. (Josue iv.)—Jansenius Gandavensis.

Our Redeemer, now that His time was come, entered Jerusalem in this triumphal manner, so as to give the Jews, whom this circumstance would exasperate, an opportunity of executing the Divine decree in regard to putting Him to death. He, moreover, wished by this to show the emptiness of human applause. For, these very men who now greeted Him with loud Hosannas, cried out on the Friday following, "*Crucify Him*," thus entailing ruin on themselves, and their doomed city, over which our Redeemer bitterly wept (Luke xix. 4).

3. Our Lord here displays His prescience and omnipotence, as well as His supreme dominion. "*The Lord*" (*ὁ κυριος*), of the universe, and Sovereign Master of all things, who is shortly to display His royal power in favour of such as expect the salvation of Israel.

"*And forthwith He will let them go.*" The Greek words, *αποσπελει αυτους*, may refer, either to our Lord, who, after using the asses, would send them back to their owners, and may be regarded as a portion of the words which He tells His disciples to address to the owners in question; or, to the owners of the asses, regarding whom our Redeemer predicts, that they would deliver up the asses to the Apostles for His use. This latter is the more probable interpretation; for, in describing the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction on the subject, St. Mark says, that when the owners were informed that our Lord wanted the asses, "*they let them go with them*" (xi. 6).

"*They*," refers to the owner of the asses, as also to his family, his wife and children.

4. "*All this*," viz., His sending for the asses, for the purpose of mounting them, "*was done*," not from curiosity, nor from accident, nor from fatigue; but, "*that it might be fulfilled*," &c. "*That*," may signify, *the event*. So *that*, as a *consequence*, the prophecy was fulfilled; or, the *cause*, He did so, for the purpose of fulfilling the prophecy of Zacharias, and thus leaving the Jews no excuse for their incredulity and obstinate rejection of Him, since, in no other king of Judea were these words verified. St. Chrysostom asks the Jews (Hom. 67, in Matth.), What other king ever entered Jerusalem, as our Lord did, on this occasion or who else fulfilled the prediction of the Prophet?

5. "*Tell ye the daughter of Sion,*" &c. In Zacharias (ix. 9), whence these words are taken, the reading is different, both in the Hebrew and Septuagint. Instead of "*Tell ye,*" it is, "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem.*" Hence, some expositors think, that the first words of the quotation, "*Tell ye,*" is taken from Isaiah (lxii. 11), where it is read, "*tell the daughter of Sion, behold thy Saviour cometh.*" St. John (xii. 15) follows the quotation from Zacharias, in substance, "*Fear not, daughter of Sion,*" which, in substance, is equivalent to "*rejoice*" and "*shout for joy,*" which are feelings the opposite of fear. By "*Sion,*" is meant Jerusalem, of which Mount Sion was the citadel and stronghold; and "*the daughter of Sion*" refers, in the first place, and in the literal signification of the words, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all the Jewish people, who acknowledged the reign of David, whose rule was from Sion. Thus, by "*the daughter of Tyre*" (Psa. xlv.), and "*daughter of Babylon*" (Psa. cxxxvi.), are meant, the citizens, the people of these cities. But, in the mystical sense, which is the one chiefly intended by the Prophet, "*the daughter of Sion*" signifies, the Spiritual Jerusalem, the Christian Church, where Christ the true David reigns, rescuing His people from their enemies, and meekly pardoning their sins.

"*Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek.*" "*Behold,*" arrests attention, and invites them to the consideration of some great event, some joyous news. "*Thy King,*" whom thou hast been so long expecting, "*cometh to thee,*" for thy sake, to redeem thee, and make thee sharer in many blessings. The Greek word for "*cometh*" (ἐρχεται), may also bear a future signification, "*will come.*" "*Meek.*" The Hebrew version followed by St. Jerome, has, "*poor.*" However, the sense is the same; since the *poor* are usually meek. Both words are nearly alike in Hebrew, and come from the same root. They differ only in a Hebrew vowel. The word for "*meek*" is, *hani*; for, *poor*, *hanau*. In Zacharias are found the words, "*the just and Saviour;*" but, they are omitted by St. Matthew, as not bearing on the subject of the quotation.

"*And sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of her,*" &c. As the other Evangelists all concur in saying, our Redeemer sat upon the colt (Mark xi. 7; Luke xix. 35; John xii. 15), it is disputed by commentators whether He sat on the dam and foal in turn, as is here insinuated by St. Matthew, who more fully quotes the Prophet Zacharias, than the other Evangelists; or on the foal only, as is inferred from the other three Evangelists, who make mention only of the colt. It is a question not easily decided. St. Jerome, and others, in a very decided way, reject the former opinion. These say, the ass is mentioned, because she accompanied the wild colt, and both are mentioned, although only one was used, by a figure common to all languages, which employs oftentimes the singular for the plural number, and *vice versa*. Thus, it is said of the thieves on the cross, "*they mocked Him,*" &c., although only one did so. These say, the Greek word for ass (ovos), may signify, a colt, and then, the words will mean, *sitting upon an ass*, "*and*" (that is, which is, at the same time, "*a colt, the foal of her,*" &c. However, the Greek, in v. 3 (ὄνον δεδεμενν), is opposed to this. Hence, the former explanation is preferable.

St. Matthew, having quoted the Prophet more largely than the others, refers to the ass and the foal, as the Prophet had done so, although the words of the Prophet, according to the advocates of this latter opinion, are not necessarily to be understood of two animals. For, they say, the Hebrew word, *chamor*, used by the Prophet, means, a he-ass, the word for a she-ass being, *athom*. This is denied by others, who say, the word, *chamor*, applies to the female animal also. This, however, is a question not easily decided. It is not without reason the Evangelists, Mark and Luke, state, that He rode "*upon a colt upon which no man sat,*" probably, to symbolize the Gentiles,

hitherto unaccustomed to the yoke; while the she-ass represents the Jews. By riding on this wild colt, our Redeemer displayed His power, in taming this animal. As the words of the Prophet may be so rendered as to apply to two different animals, or only to one, so St. Matthew employs a similar form of language.

"Of her used to the yoke" (προζυγιον), means, any beast of burden, such as a horse, an ass; but, in the New Testament, it applies specially to the latter.

6. The contents of this verse are more fully and circumstantially described by St. Mark (xi. 4-6); Luke (xix. 32-34). Every thing our Redeemer predicted, regarding the asses and their owners, was fulfilled to the letter.

7. "Garments"—outer garments (ἡματα)—"on them," the ass and the colt. They place their garments on both, in order to honour our Lord the more; and, also, because they did not know on which of them our Lord meant to sit. "*And made Him sit thereon.*" "Thereon" (ἐπ' αὐτῶν), may refer, either to the ass and the colt, upon which He may have sat in turn; or, to the "garments," the word immediately preceding. Hence, in this latter interpretation, preferred by Beelen (*Grammatica Græcitatibus*, N.T.), there is no necessity for supposing that our Lord sat on both animals. It would seem more likely, that our Lord sat successively on the ass and the colt, using the ass in ascending and descending the hills, and entering the city mounted on the colt, to typify his rule over the Jews, accustomed to the yoke, and over the Gentiles, who had not yet been subjected hitherto to the sweet yoke of God's law.

8. A great many among the crowd, vying with the disciples, whom they saw placing their garments on the asses, out of respect for their Divine Lord, took off their outer garments, and "*spread them on the way,*" as the greatest mark of respect they could show their King. It was an Oriental custom, observed also among the Greeks, to strew the road, on which their kings passed, on public occasions, with emblems of joy. These people, having no other ornaments to cast under our Lord's feet, as He passed along, "*spread their garments on the way.*" Others cut down boughs of olives and palms, with which Mount Olivet, as St. Jerome informs us, abounded, and strewed them along the ground, as a symbol of joy and triumph; while others, with the same object, came out to meet Him with branches in their hands (John xii. 13). The Jews were wont to carry palm-branches in their hands, at the Feast of Tabernacles (Levit. xxiii.), and on other occasions of rejoicing. (1 Mach. xiii. 51; 2 Mach. x.)

9. Many came out from Jerusalem, on hearing of our Lord's approach, to meet Him (John xii. 13), carrying palms in their hands; others followed Him, He Himself occupying the centre of the procession. This multitude cried out, "*Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He,*" &c. The most probable meaning of *Hosanna*, or, rather, *Hosianna*, is that given by St. Jerome (Ep. ad Damasum), "*Save, I beseech,*" or, "*Save, now.*" The word in the original Hebrew is, "*hosianna,*" and St. Jerome attributes it to ignorance, that with both the Greeks and us, it is read, *Hosanna*, by the elision of the vowel (*i*), instead of *Hosianna*, compounded of *hoscia* (*save*), and *na* (*now*, or, *I beseech*). But some of the best Hebrew scholars say, it may be written, *hosca*, as well as *hoscia*, and is so read (Psa. lxxxv. 2).—Jansenius Gandav. This phrase, *Hosianna*, is found in Psalm cxvii. 25, to which this passage is clearly allusive—"Blessed is He," &c. It is expressive of joy and gladness, of thanksgiving for past benefits, and of petition for their continuance. Hence, in Psalm cxvii., are subjoined the words, "*hæc dies quam*

fecit Dominus, exultemus," &c. St. Luke, looking to the feelings of those who used it, rather than to the strict etymological meaning of the words, says they uttered, "*peace in heaven, and glory on high*" (xix. 38). Here, the people, by Divine instinct, young and old (v. 16; Luke xix. 40), proclaim that the true David, the true King of Israel, of whom the kingly Prophet referred to in Psalm cxvii. was but a mere type, was entitled to all these royal acclamations, on His triumphant entry into His royal city.

"*Hosanna to the son of David.*" "*Save, I beseech, the son of David.*" By a Hebrew idiom, the word, "*save,*" governs a dative case. It is the same as if he said: Hosanna, the son of David—" *salva quæso filio,*" that is, *filium* David. It conveys the joyous acclamations of the people, wishing long life and prosperity to the Royal Heir of the throne of David, as we say, *Vivat Rex*—"God save the King." Hence, the Greek has the article, *τῷ υἱῷ*, the Son, long expected. They are commonly understood to be addressed to God by the people, praying Him to grant long life and prosperity to the Royal Heir to the throne of David, and also to grant Him the power and the virtue of imparting life and salvation to the people, over whom He is now about to inaugurate His spiritual reign. Hence, as if to convey this, the Vulgate uses the dative case—*filio David*—grant life and prosperity, together with the power of imparting these blessings to others, to the son of David, whom we have been anxiously expecting for thousands of years, as the rightful Heir of that kingdom, which is to have no end (A. Lapide). Others think, the words are addressed to Christ Himself, directly, by the people, entreating Him to save them: "*Save us, we beseech Thee, O son of David.*" The former interpretation is considered by far the more probable.

Most likely, as St. Jerome informs us, the Psalm (cxvii.), and the verse in question particularly, was read and sung by the Jews, in their synagogues, as having reference to the Messiah; and hence, while the more learned among the people loudly uttered the words, as referring to the Messiah, the rest of the crowd took up the words from them, and this they did from a kind of Divine instinct (Luke xix. 40). Hosanna was a form of joyous exclamation in use among the Jews, as *alleluia* is with us; and hence, the Evangelists retain it in its Hebrew form. The modern Jews, in their solemn prayers on the Feast of Tabernacles, employ *Hosanna*, after reciting the name, attributes, epithets of God, as we use in our litanies, "Hear us, we beseech Thee," "Deliver us, O Lord."

"*Blessed,*" that is, may He be blessed of God, may His reign prosper, and be happy, as we say of a king whose reign is inaugurated, *Vivat Rex*—"Long live the King." This is more clearly expressed by St. Mark, who adds, "*Blessed be the kingdom of our Father David that cometh.*"

"*That cometh*" (ὁ ἐρχόμενος), a title of the Messiah, as was also, "*the son of David*"—although present, may have a future signification—*ille venturus*, that is, He, who was long expected to come, to redeem and establish the kingdom of Israel.

"*In the name of the Lord,*" not from Himself, or self-commissioned; but, as the representative of the Lord, with His power and authority, destined and commissioned by Him to exercise authority, and visit His people.

"*Hosanna in the highest,*" is understood by some, as if there was an ellipse of ὁ ὢν (*who art*), to mean, "*save the son of David,*" our new king, "*in the highest*" (ὁ ὢν ἐν ὑψιστοῖς), Thou who dwellest in the highest heavens, as if the words referred to God dwelling in heaven. The word, "*Hosanna,*" is repeated, from feelings of intense affection. But, the more common interpretation gives "*in,*" the meaning of "*from,*" which is not unusual in SS. Scripture. (Exod. xii. 43; Lev. viii. 32, &c.) The words, then, mean, from the highest heavens save, protect, and grant a prosperous reign to one

son of David. Hence, for these words, St. Luke has (xix. 38), "*peace in heaven, and glory on high*" to God, who sent us such a Saviour. Similar are the words recited by the Angels at His birth, "*gloria in altissimis Deo et in terra pax hominibus.*" Such were the canticles and cries of joy, which all this multitude, as well those who preceded as those who followed Him, made resound to the praises of Jesus Christ; canticles like to those sung by the Angels at His birth. From them may be clearly perceived, that God, who spoke by the mouth of this multitude, had also inspired them with the belief, that this was the promised son of David, who was destined to rule over Israel. In receiving these honours from the Jewish people, it was not, as St. Chrysostom observes (Hom. 67), by any love of earthly pomp our Lord was actuated—since, from His very birth, He manifested His love for humility and power—but, for the fulfilment of the prophecies which regarded Him, and to show that, in the very humiliations He afterwards underwent, He was still all-powerful; since, He secured these honours in despite of the power of the Pharisees and of all His enemies.

St. Hilary takes occasion here to note the inconstancy and changeableness of all human applause. On this occasion, the multitude exclaimed "*Hosanna;*" again, "*Crucify Him.*" Now, "*Blessed is He that cometh,*" &c.; again, "*Away with Him; crucify Him.*" Now, He is addressed, as King; again, they have no king but Cæsar. Now, He is presented with green boughs of palms; again, with the hard and knotty wood of the cross, and with a crown of sharp thorns. Now, taking off their own garments, they cast them beneath His feet; again, they ignominiously strip Him of His own garments, and cast lots for them. How opposite their conduct, their treatment of our Blessed Redeemer; how contradictory their language regarding Him, even in the space of one short week. Who, then, should set any value on human applause? We should, therefore, ever seek His favour, who never changes, and is sure to reward us in the end.

TEXT.

10. *And when He was come into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved, saying: Who is this?*

11. *And the people said: This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee.*

12. *And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves:*

13. *And He saith to them: It is written, "My house shall be called the house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves."*

14. *And there came to him the blind, and the lame in the temple; and he healed them.*

15. *And the chief priests and scribes seeing the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, "Hosanna to the son of David;" were moved with indignation,*

16. *And said to him: Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said to them: Yea, have you never read: "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"*

COMMENTARY.

10. "*The whole city,*" &c., most likely, regards those who, either from indifference or jealousy, or fear of His enemies, did not go forth to meet our Redeemer, and refrained from doing Him honour, including the Pharisees, the Priests, the Doctors of the law, and all the others who shared in their views regarding Him; or, it may regard the entire population of the city, whom these new and unexpected acclamations of the multitude agitated with feelings of fear, hope, approval or disapproval,

according as each one was affected. Those who accompanied our Lord, were chiefly strangers from other parts of Judea, who came to the festival (John xii. 12), and who did not share in the prejudices of the Priests and Pharisees of Jerusalem. Our Redeemer wept, on the occasion of this triumphant approach, over the unhappy Jerusalem (Luke xix. 40). He did not weep when persecuted by the Jews, lest He might seem to be actuated by feelings of resentment; but now He weeps, from feelings of true, heartfelt sorrow.

Who is this? They knew Him well, as He had been often before amongst them. But this is uttered in a scornful spirit, as if such a man, this "*carpenter, and carpenter's son,*" could be entitled to any honour, as if He had any right thus to enter Jerusalem publicly, with royal honours paid Him.

11. "*The people said,*" *i.e.*, the crowds who accompanied Him, who went before and followed Him. These crowds, by Divine instinct, taught the haughty Priests and Pharisees, and their followers, who were left ignorant of the true meaning of these public acclamations, and of the true sense of the ancient prophecies, that this was no other than the true King of Israel, this son of David, promised and expected for so many ages, whose throne was to last for ever. "*This is Jesus,*" prefigured by the others who bore His name, and who bestowed only temporal salvation on Israel.

"*The Prophet,*" by excellence, whom, as Moses predicted, the Lord was to raise up amongst them (Deut. xviii. 15). The words of Deuteronomy are understood of Christ, by St. Peter (Acts iii. 22), and by Stephen (Acts vii. 37). Him the Jews should obey and acknowledge as the Prophet, even though He came from "*Nazareth of Galilee,*" out of which, according to what passed as a proverb among the Jews, nothing good was likely to come (John i. 46).

St. Luke (xix. 39) informs us, that on this triumphal march, some of the Pharisees, who were among the crowd, called upon Him to restrain His disciples by whom they either meant, all His followers in general, or His immediate attendants, who were, most likely, among the foremost in proclaiming His glory; and that our Redeemer replied, that if these were silent, the very "*stones would cry out,*" thus giving them to understand, that the multitude could not help doing what they did, acting from Divine impulse; and that the Pharisees were harder and more insensible than the very rocks. The stones did, in a certain sense, cry out, when, at His death, the very rocks were rent; and, in a mystical sense, when the Gentile world—these children, whom God raised up to Abraham from the very stones and hardness of unbelief—proclaimed Him to be a Saviour, from the rising to the setting sun.

12. "*And Jesus went into the temple of God.*" On entering Jerusalem, our Redeemer makes straight for the temple, the house of His Father, the palace of His spiritual kingdom, rather than to Mount Sion, the citadel of the earthly Jerusalem; and He enters at once on the exercise of His spiritual authority, by purging it of the defilements of which it was made the theatre. By "*the temple of God,*" is meant, the whole edifice, with its several courts. The portion of it in which the events here recorded took place, was the Court of the Gentiles, to which they, as well as the Jews who laboured under legal defilement, had access, for the purpose of prayer. This court was very ample. It by no means refers to the temple, strictly so-called, comprising the Holy and Holy of Holies. Into the Holy, only the Priests, and into the Holy of Holies, only the High Priest could enter. It is a subject of controversy among commentators, whether this happened on the first day of our Redeemer's entry into Jerusalem, as is here seemingly stated by St. Matthew; for, he relates that it

occurred in connexion with the people's singing their hosannas and songs of joy, which caused the Priests and Scribes to remonstrate with Him (vv. 15, 16). Or, whether it happened on the second day, as is apparently deducible from St. Mark, who distinctly states, that on the first day of our Saviour's entrance, He merely entered the temple late in the evening, when the money-changers, &c., had ceased from the business of the day, and "*having viewed all things round about, went out to Bethania*" (xi. 11).

Some commentators, following St. Augustine, adopt the order of St. Matthew, guided chiefly by the words of verse 17, from which it would appear, that it was after expelling the profaners from the temple, He went out to Bethania. The words of this verse might, however, refer to the same occurrence referred to (xi. 19) of St. Mark, which took place the day following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The advocates of this opinion say, that St. Mark, who seems to refer these events to the *second* day, recapitulates what occurred on the *first* day.

Others maintain, that the order adopted by St. Mark is the true one; for, St. Matthew confounds with the events of the *second* day of our Saviour's arrival at Jerusalem, what St. Mark distinctly states to have occurred on the *third* day after He arrived, viz., the wonder expressed by the disciples regarding the withering of the fig tree (xi. 20). Hence, it is probable that, in narrating the events of the *first* day of our Saviour's arrival, St. Matthew also mentioned some of the things which happened only on the *second* day. St. Matthew's narrative is such, that one would suppose our Redeemer came from Bethania to Jerusalem only two successive days, and that the events which took place only happened on two successive days; whereas, St. Mark distinctly states, that the events, in connexion with the ejection of the buyers and sellers from the temple, occurred on *three* successive days. Cajetan is of opinion, that our Lord cast out the profane traffickers on both days, Sunday and Monday.

"*And cast out all who were buying and selling in the temple,*" &c. As the Jews had but one place of sacrifice, viz., the Temple of Jerusalem, such as came from afar to the temple on the occasion of the great Paschal solemnity, in order to avoid the great inconvenience of carrying with them the required victims, bought for the price of the same victims which they sold at home, according to the provisions of the law (Deut. xiv. 24, &c), the victims which each one was expected, according to his circumstances in life, to present in the temple. The proper place for such purchases was the public market-place. Either the Priests themselves and their servants carried on a traffic in the outer court of the temple, ostensibly for the accommodation of strangers, in the several kinds of victims destined for sacrifice; or, they rented the place to merchants for the purpose. "*Overthrew the tables of the money changers.*" These were a kind of *money brokers*, who exchanged foreign for Jewish coin, or larger for smaller coin, and this, probably, at a rate of usury, that could not be approved of. They were called *κολλυβιστοὶ* from *κολλυβος*, a *small coin*. There were also chairs placed there, on which these sat who sold doves; these were generally women, who could not remain very long in a standing position. They sold "*doves*," the offerings exacted from the poor. All this traffic, owing to the avarice which dictated it on the part of the Priests, the lying frauds committed in it, and the tumult it gave rise to at the very entrance of the house of prayer, was unworthy of the sanctity of the temple; and hence, our Redeemer, animated with a zeal for the glory of His Father's house, on this second occasion, as He had done before, at the very commencement of His mission (John ii. 14), drives them out ignominiously, and justifies His conduct from Sacred Scripture (Isa. lvi. 7; Jer. vii. 11). Most likely, He used a scourge of cords to drive out the cattle, as

He did on a former occasion (John ii. 15). It is not likely, however, that He scourged the people, since, after driving out the cattle, He says, "*auferte ista*," &c., which supposes the people to remain.

13. "*My house*." My temple, specially dedicated to the Divine Service, where God Himself specially resides, and is specially accessible. (2 Par. vii. 12, &c.)

"*The house of prayer*," exclusively devoted to all the things appertaining to God's service. This quotation from Isaias (lvi. 7) which directly applies, and is intended immediately to refer, to the spiritual temple, or Church of God, is accommodated by our Lord to the material Temple of Jerusalem, a type of the Church, into which all the Gentiles were admitted, "*cunctis populis*"—for all nations. And even into the material Temple of Jerusalem the Gentiles at this time had access. By "*prayer*," are understood sacrifices, &c.

"*But you have made it a den of thieves*," is taken from Jeremias (vii. 11). In the passage referred to, the Almighty calls His house "*a den of robbers*," because it was the place of resort for those who were guilty of robbery, idolatry, adultery, &c. Here, it is called, "*a den of robbers*," because, in it, men had carried on a traffic, intent solely on temporal spoil and gain—like robbers, who plunder from this motive. Again, because the Priests and Pharisees made the plea of religion a lurking pretext for avarice; like robbers, hiding in a cave, they had solely in view to plunder and rob the poor. The avaricious and robbers are both alike in this, that both carry on their iniquitous projects for temporal gain and plunder. Hence, our Redeemer indignantly chastises the conduct of those who, like robbers, make His temple the lurking place of men, and lie in wait, for the purposes of plunder and temporal emolument. The quotation from Jeremias was also calculated to suggest to the Jews, that as the first temple to which the Prophet refers in that chapter (vii.), as about to be destroyed, owing to the crimes of the people, was razed to the ground by the Babylonians; so also, the temple in which they carried on their nefarious traffic, might also be one day destroyed, as we know it afterwards was, by the Romans under Titus. St. Jerome regards this chasing from the temple as one of the greatest miracles recorded of our Redeemer—greater than the raising of Lazarus, or the cure of the man who was born blind; and so it seems to be, considering all the circumstances of our Redeemer's person, and the power of His enemies; and St. Jerome accounts for His enemies permitting it and the traffickers obeying Him, on the ground, that from our Redeemer's eyes there darted forth beams of bright rays of heavenly majesty, which lit up His features with an irresistible splendour, that overawed the beholders, "*igneum enim quiddam atque sidereum radiabat ex oculis ejus, et divinitatis majestas lucebat in facie*."

If God was thus jealous for the sanctity of the typical Temple of Jerusalem, how much more in regard to our Christian temples, where He personally resides, in the adorable Sacrament. If He thus severely taxed the avarice of the Jewish Priests, and cast them out of the temple, how much more rigorously shall He punish those who make spiritual ministrations subservient to the purposes of avarice, and cast them out from the society of the Saints; and it is to be borne in mind, that their participation in holy things, far from rendering them more holy, only causes them to be regarded as robbers before God, whose temple they make "*a den of thieves*," a mart of sacrilegious traffic.

And, as our souls are the temples of God (1 Cor. iii. 16, &c.; vi. 15, &c.), we can estimate, from this passage, how much more jealous God is regarding the sanctity of our souls, His interior temples, than regarding that of the material temple, and with how

much greater rigour they shall be punished who violate the temple of their own souls (1 Cor. iii. 16). From this, we see the necessity of having our souls continually devoted to God's service, "*domus mea domus orationis est.*" We render our souls abodes of prayer, according to St. Augustine, by continual longing after God; by perpetual sighs, caused by the knowledge of our miseries, the view of the manifold perils our salvation is exposed to, and our exile from Him, who is alone capable of satiating all the desires of our hearts. St. Hilary remarks on the passage (in Matth. xxi.), that, as the Holy Ghost is represented chiefly under the figure of a dove in SS. Scriptures, and the chairs denote power, so our Redeemer, in overturning the tables of those who sold doves, points out the rigour of the chastisements He will inflict on those who, raised to the dignity of the Priesthood, make a traffic of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost. St. Jerome makes a similar remark on this passage.

Origen says, by the three classes of men cast out of the temple, are signified, three classes of avaricious men, unworthy of the society of the Saints. The *buyers and sellers*, those who, among the Christian people, are intent solely on amassing gain. The *money changers*, those who abuse the ecclesiastical wealth destined for the poor, and from them heap up treasures for themselves; and *the sellers of doves*, those who make sale of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

14. After having displayed the rigours of His justice against the profaners of His temple, our Redeemer now displays His mercy and benevolence. He cures the lame and the blind, in the temple. He thus exhibits His Divine power, and gives a further proof, that He was the long-expected Messiah, whose coming, as was long before foretold, was to be characterized by the miracles which our Redeemer now performs. "*Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart,*" &c. (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.)

15. *The wonderful things He had done,*" viz., the miracle of driving the profane traffickers out of the temple, curing the lame and the blind, His royal entry into Jerusalem, "*and the children crying out in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David, were moved with indignation,*" when they should rather be moved, by the miracles and the undoubted signs of Divine power He exhibited, to acknowledge Him as their long-expected Messiah. Their hearts were, in consequence, as a punishment of resistance to grace, hardened. The mysteries of grace revealed to the little ones, the humble and the docile, were concealed from them; and hence, they were filled with wrath and indignation.

16. "*Hearest Thou not what these say?*" The Pharisees suppress their feelings as long as these loud acclamations were uttered by the crowd. But, now, when the enthusiasm had died away, and these acclamations were uttered only by the children, they endeavour to tax Him with aspiring to Divine honours, that thus they might have matter for accusing Him. "*Hearest Thou not?*" &c., as if to say, canst Thou allow these to render Thee the honour due to God alone? to attribute to Thee what belongs only to the King of Israel, the long expected Messiah? Our Redeemer, as St. Chrysostom remarks, could have retorted, and asked them, "Do you hear these things?" Do you not see that the Holy Spirit Himself speaks through these, and unchains their tongues to give utterance to what they understand not? But He only evades giving a direct answer. If He admitted that He was entitled to these honours, they would charge Him with disloyalty; if He denied it, they would charge the

multitude with falsely attributing to Him what He was not entitled to. Our Redeemer, employing the same heavenly prudence which He had resorted to on another and similar occasion (xxii. 17), without replying to their captious question, says, "*yes.*" I do hear the children ; but, without giving any direct answer as to whether they were right or wrong, He replies to them in the language of the SS. Scriptures, "*have you never read*"—you, who glory in your knowledge of the Divine Scriptures—" *out of the mouth of infants and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise ?*" These words are quoted from Psal. viii. 3. According to the Septuagint version, the Hebrew for "*perfected praise*" is, *ussadta oz*—" *Thou hast founded strength,*" but there is no difference in meaning. By speaking through the mouth of infants, and unchaining the tongues of suckling babes, He has displayed His power, and rendered it most deserving of all praise and glory, by having, through such weak and inadequate means, accomplished great ends. The words of the Psalm, in their literal sense, refer to the glory and magnificence of God, as displayed in the works of creation, "*quoniam ridebo cælos tuos,*" &c., or, rather, to the power of God displayed in these works. But in this passage, they are, by accommodation, referred to the power of God displayed in the work of Redemption, the second creation, whereby He renewed the face of the earth. Hence, in a more prominent sense, they apply to Christ, the first amongst the sons of men, and to Him, in a special manner, do the characters and qualities mentioned in this Psalm refer. But, what was said of man in general, or of our Divine Redeemer, and the redemption accomplished by Him, and the instruments employed by Him, in particular, is here accommodated by our Redeemer to His present case ; and He thus confutes His adversaries, by showing—1st. That these children spoke from the inspiration of God ; that it was He impelled them to give utterance, by their lips, to what they had hardly comprehended in their minds, "*ex ore infantium,*" &c. ; and hence, He would not resist the inspiration, or voice of God, by silencing these children. 2ndly. He insinuates, that this was done to confute them, and show forth their folly ; for, immediately after the words here quoted, the Psalmist subjoins, "*ut destruas inimicum et ultorem,*" that is, catch them in their craftiness, and destroy their wisdom. But, for fear of exasperating His enemies too much, our Redeemer omits quoting these latter words. His answer almost amounts to this : I do hear what they say ; but, do you wish Me to order those be silent whose mouths God Himself has opened to perfect His praise, to give due glory to His power, and to confute the enemies of His name, among whom you are to be reckoned ? He thus refutes them without giving a direct reply to their captious question. It is disputed whether there is question here of babes and sucklings, for whom it would amount to a miracle, to utter these words, and fill the temple with their acclamations, or, of young boys, who imitated what they heard from the crowd ; and now, under Divine impulse, gave fresh utterance to it, on beholding the miraculous cures of the lame and the blind.

Some are of the former opinion, as the words literally mean this : and it would redound more to the glory of Christ, if the very babes and sucklings spoke. (St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, &c.) The words of St. Luke (xix. 40), are corroborative of this, "*if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.*" Others adopt the latter opinion. The children are termed, *παῖδας*, boys. The Pharisees, who see and hear the children, do not regard their shouts as miraculous. "*Hearst Thou what these (boys) say ?*" If they regarded it as miraculous, their first attempt would be to throw discredit on the miracle, as they often did before. Moreover, the Psalm, from which the words are quoted, may be understood of children older than mere babes or sucklings.

TEXT.

17. *And leaving them, he went out of the city into Bethania, and remained there.*
18. *And in the morning returning into the city, he was hungry.*
19. *And seeing a certain fig-tree by the way-side, he came to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only, and he said to it: May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig-tree withered away.*
20. *And the disciples seeing it wondered, saying: How is it presently withered away?*
21. *And Jesus answering said to them: Amen I say to you, if you shall have faith, and stagger not, not only this of the fig-tree shall you do, but also if you shall say to this mountain, Take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done.*
22. *And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive.*
23. *And when he was come into the temple, there came to him as he was teaching, the chief priests and ancients of the people, saying: By what authority dost thou these things? and who hath given thee this authority?*
24. *Jesus answering said to them: I also will ask you one word, which if you shall tell me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.*
25. *The baptism of John whence was it? from heaven, or from men? But they thought within themselves, saying:*
26. *If we shall say from heaven, he will say to us: Why then did you not believe him? But if we shall say from men, we are afraid of the multitude: for all held John as a prophet.*
27. *And answering Jesus they said: We know not. He also said to them: Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.*

COMMENTARY.

17. "*Leaving them,*" confounded, rather than convinced, owing to their envy and rage on account of the honours which the people paid Him, as also on account of the manner in which He summarily ejected the traffickers from the temple, the cures He performed, and the praises and acclamations of the children.

"*He went out of the city into Bethania,*" where He remained with Martha and Mary. This, as St. Jerome observes, was an expressive type of the rejection and reprobation of the Jews, and of the calling of the Gentiles. Some, also, with St. Jerome, comment unfavourably on the ingratitude and fickleness of the crowd, none of whom offered Him the shelter of hospitality for the night. This latter observation is not, however, much attended to by others, who attribute His leaving the city to other causes; among the rest, lest He might be suspected of plotting during the night with His followers, as to the mode of securing royal power, &c.

18. "*In the morning . . . He was hungry.*" Some say, this was natural hunger, consequent on His having spent the night in watching and prayer, which He usually did, and is to be presumed to have done on this occasion (Luke xxi. 37, 38). Others say, the hunger, though real, was voluntarily assumed by our Redeemer, in order to give occasion to the following miracle, which He wrought, for the instruction of His disciples.

19. "*Seeing a certain fig-tree by the way side.*" St. Mark (xi. 13) says, "*He had seen it afar off.*" Both accounts are perfectly reconcilable. "*He came to it.*" St. Mark says (xi. 13), "*if perhaps He might find anything on it.*" This he adds, because men are wont to act so; or, possibly, St. Mark only expresses what the disciples supposed

His object to be, as is observed by St. Chrysostom. "*And found nothing on it but leaves only.*" St. Mark adds (xi. 14), "*that the time for figs had not yet arrived.*" He then cursed it. "*May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig-tree withered away.*" It would be the sheerest folly to suppose, that our Redeemer cursed the fig-tree out of mere passion or impulse for not finding fruit on it when no fruit could be expected. But, as He prophesied by words, so did He also by action—a thing quite usual with the ancient Prophets, who, conforming to the Oriental usages, often expressed things by symbolical actions. The whole occurrence here may be regarded as a prophetic parable. Our Redeemer, who had hitherto performed all His miracles as so many proofs of His merciful benevolence, now, in order to confirm the faith of His disciples, displays the rigours of His justice, in the malediction of the barren fig-tree, which clearly typified His justice on the sinners who bring forth not the expected fruits of grace. For, although man could not expect fruit from a tree except in due season; still, God has a right to expect from us, at all times, the fruits of justice and solid piety, of which those that might be expected from the fig-tree were but a type and lively image; and, in punishment of our sterility, God will strike us with still greater spiritual barrenness and decay. This transaction was a prophetic menace, intended to instruct the Jews and His disciples. The fig-tree did not merit the curse pronounced upon it; it did so, however, relatively, in regard to the people, of whom it was a type or symbol. The fig-tree represented the Jewish synagogue, and the malediction pronounced on it by our Lord, represented the malediction pronounced against the synagogue for its sterility. The hunger of our Lord, represented the ardent desire to find the synagogue bring forth fruit corresponding with the many miracles and instructions and other graces by which He wished to attract it to Himself. The leaves of the fig-tree represented the ceremonies, sacrifices, external worship of the ancient law, in which the Jews so much gloried over so many nations, without producing the internal works of justice. The withering of the tree, represents the reprobation of the synagogue. And, although the Jewish people will be saved in the end of the world, "*when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, all Israel shall be saved*" (Rom. xi. 25), still, this does not militate against the malediction of our Lord; for the words, *eis ton aiona*, as St. Jerome remarks, does not necessarily imply, it should be for ever cursed; or, we may say, that if Israel is saved, it is not from the helps furnished by the synagogue, but, by the grace of the Church of the New Law. Moreover, everything in the type does not necessarily correspond with the thing typified. Commentators here admire the goodness of our Redeemer, who, whenever He wishes to manifest His saving power, and give an example of spiritual salvation, wrought by Himself, selects men for the objects of His benevolence, proposing to them the hope of future blessings, and indicating the cure of their souls by the present cure of their bodies; but, when He wishes to display His vindictive power, and admonish the reprobate Jews, who yield no fruit, of the punishments in store for them, He selects, as a type, an inanimate object, whereon to display His just vengeance.

20. "*And the disciples seeing it,*" &c. This happened the following Tuesday morning, as appears from St. Mark (xi. 20). The curse pronounced by our Redeemer on the preceding day, had imperceptibly produced its effect, so that the following morning the tree was withered up. Hence, the wonder on the part of the Apostles.

21. Our Redeemer takes occasion, from the circumstance of the withering of the barren fig-tree, to inculcate on His disciples the powerful efficacy of prayer and confidence in God.

"*Amen, I say to you.*" St. Mark (xi. 22) says, our Redeemer told them, "*Have the faith of God.*" "*If you shall have faith, and stagger not.*" The Greek for "*stagger*" (*διακρίθητε*), means, to *judge, discern*, as to the power of God and the facility or difficulty of accomplishing the work. "*Faith*," that extraordinary degree of intense faith, accompanied with confidence in God, and the gift of miracles, *fides miraculorum*. "*as a grain of mustard seed*" (xvii. 19). It is to this kind of faith He refers here. For, as to "*staggering*," or doubting, every degree of true faith excludes all doubt; but here the word means, *extraordinary confidence*.

"*But also if you shall say to this mountain,*" &c. This is a proverbial form of expression, and means, that, on occasions when the glory of God would require it, such an event would be accomplished. It by no means implies, that this would take place on ordinary occasions, or without utility, or from an ostentatious display of power. Our Redeemer Himself never exercised His miraculous powers for display or ostentation. *Reg. Mamm...*

22. These words are, of course, to be received with the proper limitations and restrictions. As regards things appertaining to salvation, they are to be asked for absolutely. As regards other things, they are to be sought for conformably to God's holy will. Besides faith, St. Mark lays down another condition necessary for securing the efficacy of our prayers, viz., forgiveness of injuries (xi. 25). For the conditions of prayers (see Commentary on St. John, 1 Ep. v. 14).

23. Our Redeemer employed the day-time in instructing the people, and at night He retired to Mount Olivet; "*and all the people came early in the morning . . . to hear Him*" (Luke xxi. 37, 38). "*It came to pass on one of these days.*" On the third day after His triumphal entry, viz., Tuesday, after Palm Sunday, "*as He was teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the Gospel* (Luke xx. 1), *the Chief Priests* (St. Luke adds, '*and Scribes*') *and ancients of the people came to Him,*" &c. "*By what authority*" (*ἐξουσία*), whether of yourself, or derived from others, "*dost Thou these things?*" viz., preaching to the people; receiving the honour due to the Messiah alone; making a triumphal entry into the temple; casting out the victims destined for the altar, &c. SS. Mark and Luke repeat the question, "*Who hath given Thee this authority to do these things?*" The question was grounded on the justly-received principle, that no one can assume to himself the ministry of religious teaching, unless he received authority to do so from God directly, or, through the hands of those commissioned by Him, "*nec quisquam sibi assumat honorem sed qui vocatur a Deo tanquam Aaron*" (Heb. v. 4). The question was meant captiously, in the present instance. For, although the Priests, &c., had a right to ask the question, because the ordinary permission to teach in the temple was derived from them, and they had the power of inquiring into the pretensions of a Prophet; still, in this instance, our Redeemer had already proved His mission by the incontestable miracles He wrought, and from the prophecies of SS. Scripture, verified in His regard. His enemies hoped to involve Him in a difficulty, by the answer they expected. They wished to involve Him in the guilt of schism and sedition, by intruding Himself, unsent, into a ministry, to which the Messiah alone could have pretensions; and, if He said He was the Messiah, they would have, probably, charged Him with *blasphemy*. Our Redeemer had already sufficiently replied to this question, by acts. The miracles He alone performed, left them no excuse, and had already proved Him to be the Messiah, and showed the authority, in virtue of which He acted. He declines answering them directly, on this occasion, not *from fear* (as the parables He subjoins clearly demonstrate), but from the deliberate design of

confounding them, by proposing a question calculated to baffle them. With consummate wisdom, He destroys their cunning, by having recourse to a method familiar to both Jews and Greeks, of answering by interrogation, and solving one question by proposing another, which, if candidly answered, would solve the former one, and serve to condemn themselves; if the question were evasively answered, it would prove them to be unworthy of receiving a reply from Him. It was a perfectly fair course to ask a question, the answer to which would solve the question proposed by them.

25. "*The baptism of John,*" including his doctrine and preaching; was it "*from Heaven or from men?*" Did John act in virtue of a Divine commission, or only from human authority?

"*They thought within themselves, saying.*" They discussed the question apart among themselves, probably out of the hearing of our Redeemer. The Greek word, *διαλογίζοντο*, means, *they reasoned*, among themselves.

26. "*Why, then, did you not believe him?*" by receiving the baptism of penance, at his preaching, or, rather, by believing his testimony, in regard to Me, whom he proclaims to be the promised Messiah, "*the Lamb of God,*" &c. "*We are afraid of the multitude (lest they stone us,* Luke xx. 6), *for all held John as a prophet,*" or one Divinely commissioned to preach and baptize

27. To avoid the consequences of a direct answer, they have recourse to a lie, by which they condemned themselves; for, they, the teachers of others, should not be ignorant of what the whole people were convinced of, and which they should know, in virtue of their office, which warranted them in thus questioning our Redeemer's authority.

"*We know not.*" Our Redeemer does not imitate their example, by uttering a falsehood, and saying, *I know not* by what authority I do these things; but, as they were unworthy of an answer, He tells them He will not declare by what authority He acted. He will not answer their question, as they were unwilling to answer His, which, if answered by them, would convey a reply to their own. For, if they acknowledged John's preaching to be from God, then they could not doubt that our Redeemer was the Messiah, and thus, His Divine authority was at once declared.

TEXT.

28. *But what think you? A certain man had two sons, and coming to the first, he said: Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.*

29. *And he answering, said: I will not. But afterwards, being moved with repentance, he went.*

30. *And coming to the other, he said in like manner. And he answering, said: I go, sir, and he went not:*

31. *Which of the two did the father's will? They say to him: The first. Jesus saith to them: Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you.*

32. *For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and the harlots believed him: but you seeing it, did not even afterwards repent, that you might believe him.*

COMMENTARY.

28. Affecting ignorance of what they knew well, as to whether John's baptism was from Heaven or not, the Pharisees would not answer our Redeemer's

question. He, then, before dismissing the allusion to John the Baptist, takes occasion, from their evasive answer, to propose a parable, the application of which was quite evident, and while He supposed the Divine mission of John, clearly proved them guilty of incredulity, the imputation of which they were anxious to avoid. He wishes to humble their pride, who were inflated with a sense of their own dignity, and the affectation of superior knowledge, and false science. This He does in a most telling way, by proposing a case, or a question, in the form of a parable, the answer to which, as well as its application to themselves, was quite clear. Out of their own mouth, He condemns them, and shows that "*the publicans and harlots shall precede them in the kingdom of God.*" The parable, in its literal meaning, is quite clear. Its application is equally so. The man in question refers to Almighty God, the common Father of all. The two sons refer to the Pharisees, on the one hand, and the public sinners among the Jews, as is clear from verse 31, "*the publicans and harlots,*" &c. The son who refused to obey his father's injunctions, in the first instance, but afterwards obeyed in act, refers to the "*publicans and harlots,*" the public sinners of either sex among the Jews, who, by their sins, disobeyed God, refused to observe His law, rejected His call to cultivate, by penance, the spiritual vineyard of their souls, but afterwards were converted to penance, and embraced God's holy law. The son who promised obedience, in the first instance, but afterwards disobeyed, in act, represented the Pharisees, who had always on their lips the law of God, made an external profession of piety, but were destitute of its spirit, failed in its practices, disobeyed God's law preached to them by John the Baptist, despised his baptism, and refused to believe in Christ, to whom he bore testimony.

31. "*Jesus said to them, Amen I say to you,*" &c. Without dwelling on the meaning of the parable, which clearly applied to the Pharisees, our Redeemer at once announced the conclusion to be derived from their own admission. The man who did, in act, what His Father commanded, *obeyed*; while the other, who promised obedience in word, but did not carry it out in act, *disobeyed*. Hence, "*the publicans and harlots*"—the public sinners of either sex among the Jews—"shall go into the kingdom of God before you," that is, shall be admitted into the enjoyment of God's bliss, before you, who, having refused the way of penance, preached by John the Baptist, shall be altogether excluded from that kingdom of bliss, to which penance conducts. The same is conveyed in the parable of the two sons, in the Gospel of St. Luke (xv. 11), where the younger son represented the public sinners. The same are represented here by the first-born, because such sinners, on doing penance, are first before God, and precede those who seem to themselves just. Thus, "*the last shall be first,*" &c. The Greek for, "*Go before you,*" is, "*shall precede you,*" as if conveying, that they go before them in the road to heaven, by penance and faith, and shall be admitted there before them. For, they shall be utterly excluded.

The parable may also, in a secondary sense, regard the Gentile and Jewish peoples; the former, represented by those among the Jews, who were converted from their sins, and did not promise to obey God's word, but did so, in act; the latter, by those who remained obstinate, after having promised to Moses (Exod. xix. 8), "*all whatsoever, the Lord shall speak to us, we shall do,*" still continued obstinate in their incredulity, and resistance to God's law. Theirs was only lip service, without obedience in act, depending solely on the justice of the law, and not on faith. Hence, they arrived not at the law of justice, but stumbled against the rock of offence (Rom. ix. 30), &c.

32. "*John came to you,*" in preference to all other peoples, "*in the way of justice,*" exhibiting true justice, by a holy, irreproachable life, exemplifying in his conduct, the lessons of penance and humility which he taught, thus showing himself what all, except the haughty Pharisees, believed him to be, viz., a Prophet, truly sent from God.

"*You did not believe him,*" either by obeying the precepts of penance, which he announced, or by receiving the Messiah, to whom he bore testimony.

"*But the publicans and harlots believed him,*" which adds to the condemnation of the Pharisees, who, not only were unmoved by the holy life and teaching of John, but still remained obstinate, and refused to enter on a life of penance, even after the example of these sinful men and women was placed before them, to stimulate them.

"*You . . . did not even afterwards repent,*" that is, you did not follow their example, whom you should precede, in doing penance, "*that*"—under the influence of holy penance—"you might believe him," and thus follow his precepts, and admit his testimony regarding the Son of God.

Our Redeemer censures two things in the Pharisees—their incredulity in regard to the testimony of John, and their contumacious obstinacy in that incredulity, even after the example of the greatest sinners, who became converted, had been placed before them.

TEXT.

33. *Hear ye another parable: There was a man an householder who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen: and went into a strange country.*

34. *And when the time of the fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof.*

35. *And the husbandmen laying hands on his servants, beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.*

36. *Again he sent other servants more than the former: and they did to them in like manner.*

37. *And last of all he sent to them his son, saying: They will reverence my son.*

38. *But the husbandmen seeing the son, said among themselves: This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and we shall have his inheritance.*

39. *And taking him they cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.*

40. *When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen?*

41. *They say to him: He will bring those evil men to an evil end: and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, that shall render him the fruit in due season.*

COMMENTARY.

33. Our Redeemer, having censured the obstinate incredulity of the Scribes and Pharisees, in the application of the preceding parable, now employs another parable, in which He notes some of their most grievous crimes, and the ruin which such crimes was to entail on them. St. Jerome remarks (*in hunc locum*), that the Chief Priests and princes of the people, who sought to surprise in His words, Him who is Eternal Wisdom itself, and had arrogantly demanded of Him to show His authority for the things He did (v. 23), are now vanquished by their own arms; since, He proposes to them, under the veil of parables, what they did not deserve to have explained to them openly. They are caught in their own snares, whereby they wished to surprise

Him; and, without perceiving at first to what the several comparisons tended, they are forced to pronounce their own condemnation.

The scope of the parable, of which the literal sense needs no explanation, is clearly expressed by our Redeemer Himself (v. 43).

"*The householder*," who is the same as "*the man who had two sons*" (v. 28), denotes God the Father, the Father of the entire human family, who governs and upholds all living creatures.

"*Who planted a vineyard*," that is, His people Israel, in the land of Chanaan, after having transferred them from Egypt, and chased the Gentiles, "*vineam de Egypto transtulisti*," &c. (Psa. lxxix. 9). From the Prophet Isaias, our Redeemer borrows this similitude (Isa. v. 1), in order to bring greater conviction to their minds, and to impress them the more. For, Isaias not only employs the parable; but, he also predicts that our Redeemer would employ it (c. v. 1), and in the same passage the Holy Ghost explains what "*the vineyard*" meant. "*For, the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel*" (c. v. 7). And what the expected fruits meant, is clearly explained: "*I looked that He should do judgment, and behold iniquity; and to do justice and behold a cry*" (c. v. 7).

"*Made a hedge . . . winepress . . . tower*." It is observed by some of the most distinguished interpreters of SS. Scripture, among the rest, by Grotius, that it is not necessary to explain in detail what these words signify; since, our Redeemer, as well as the Prophet, from whom He borrows the idea, only mean to denote by them, in a general way, all the things which served to ornament and protect the vineyard, or to help in gathering in the expected fruit. However, we may explain this "*hedge and tower*," of the all powerful protection of the Lord; since the Royal Prophet declares to God, in the midst of the persecutions he suffered, at the hands of Saul, that he was a "*tower of strength against the face of the enemy*;" and his son, Solomon, expresses the same, "*The name of the Lord is as an impregnable tower*" &c. (Prov. xviii. 10); and when the Lord menaces His people with the withdrawal of His protection, He employs the same figurative and expressive language (Isa. v. 5), "*I will take away the hedge thereof and it shall be wasted*," that is, He shall take away His powerful protection, which is the greatest misfortune that can befall, either an entire people, or a particular soul. The same idea is conveyed by the demon when, addressing God in the case of Job he says, "*nonne tu vallasti eum?*" &c. St. Jerome, however, understands by the "*tower*," in a more special way, the Temple of Jerusalem, the strength of the Jewish people, in which they reposed their chiefest confidence. In it, they dwelt who were to watch over the interests of the vineyard. By the "*hedge*," some understand the Mosaic Law, which separated them from the other nations, and prescribed the limits beyond which they should not pass; others, the protection of God, through His Angels, and the rulers of the people. By the "*winepress*," is signified the altar of holocausts, from which the blood of the victim flowed on all sides, as the wine flows under the pressure of the winepress. However, if the principal scope of the parable be attended to, there is no necessity for explaining its several parts in detail.

"*And let it out to husbandmen*," that is, He charged the princes, priests and magistrates to cultivate it with care, and to guard it according to the rank which each one held, and the functions each one exercised. The word, "*let*," implies, that He kept to Himself the *right and dominion* over it.

"*Went into a strange country*." Not by change of place, as St. Jerome observes, (*in hunc locum*), since He fills all space by His glorious immensity; but, in order to leave to the husbandmen free will to labour or not, He withdrew, in appearance, by withholding the visible and remarkable signs of His presence, such as He exhibited

in the time of Moses and Josue, and the first rulers of the Jewish people ; as a man in a distant country, cannot oversee the husbandmen, but, leaves them to themselves.

34. "*The time of the fruit,*" means, according to some, the time of David, Solomon, Ezechiel, &c., when the Jews had rested in the land of promise, and were expected to exhibit the fruits of virtue and legal observances ; others hold, that as God had always expected from His people the fruits of justice, consisting in the love of God and their neighbour, and the fulfilment of all His ordinances, that this is introduced merely as an ornamental part of the parable, and our Redeemer employs this form of speech to conform to the figurative language of the parable of the vineyard, according to which there is a special time for collecting the fruit thereof. "*The time of the fruits,*" which He sent His servants to collect, shows the great patience of God in waiting for His people ; and the duty of those in charge of them, to exhibit the fruit of good works, fidelity in observing His ordinances.

By "*the servants,*" are meant the Prophets, sent at different times to remind the people and their rulers, by salutary admonitions, of their duty and their obligation, to cultivate the vineyard, by performing works worthy of penance, and not seek their own exclusive profit, but the profit, that is to say, the glory of its Master. We read of these Prophets being occasionally sent to rouse the faith and piety of the Jewish people—Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Zacharias, &c. These illustrious heroes of faith, in discharging their ministry, were more jealous of the interests of their Heavenly Master than of their own ; nay, even His interests were more precious to them than their own lives.

35. But, far from rendering the expected fruit, "*the husbandmen,*" that is, the princes, priests, doctors, &c., to whom the Lord confided the culture of the vineyard, laid violent hands on the "*servants.*" "*One they beat,*" Jeremias ; "*another they killed,*" Isaias ; "*another stoned,*" Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom they killed between the temple and the altar. From St. Matthew, it would appear, that these three servants here referred to, were sent simultaneously ; while Luke and Mark say, they were sent successively.

36. His sending His servants in greater numbers, after the treatment inflicted on the others, would seem to be with a view of offering a holy violence to the husbandmen, to induce them to render the expected fruits. This exhibits, in the clearest manner, the patience and long-suffering of God, which human malice could not overcome.

"*And they did to them in like manner.*" This is eloquently described by St. Paul to the Hebrews. (xi. 35, &c.)

37. But the excessive patience and goodness of God is manifested more clearly still, in sending "*His Son,*" or, as St. Mark has it, His "*one Son most dear to Him*" (xii. 6). St. Luke (xx. 13), says, He asked, "*What shall I do ? I will send My beloved Son.*" These words do not imply any doubt in God. They may, probably, be merely an ornamental part of the parable, or, rather, they convey the excessive love of God for man, when desirous of leaving nothing undone for their reparation, He thinks of the last expedient, viz., sending His Son.

"*They will reverence my son.*" These words, any more than the former, employed by St. Luke (xx. 13), "*it may be . . . they will reverence him,*" do not imply any ignorance on the part of God. They merely express what the clear duty of the

husbandmen was, and the great crime they committed in violating this clear duty. Moreover, they are spoken, in accommodation to the parable; and they seem to denote the exercise of human liberty, with which God's prescience nowise interferes. How often does not God expect, in vain even from Christians, "*they will reverence My Son.*" At least, should He not expect, that out of gratitude towards Him, who has done and suffered so much for them, they would observe His ordinances, and thus show their love for Him? Would, that even in approaching the Holy Altar, those whom He has chosen as His friends and special confidants, when about to receive the Lamb without spot, always remembered these words, "*they will reverence My Son.*" With what fervour of soul and purity of conscience, would they not approach the altar; with what reverence would they perform the most Divine of all works, "*verebuntur filium meum.*" What of those Christians who receive Him into hearts polluted with mortal sin—the abodes of the devil? Do they reverence the Eternal Son of God, when they thus betray Him into the hands of His enemies?

38. "*But the husbandmen*"—now about "*to fill up the measure of their fathers*" (xxiii. 32), who had slain, and in different ways maltreated the Prophets—"seeing the son, said among themselves: *This is the heir,*" &c. By "*the son,*" as was evident, even to the Pharisees, against whom the parable is directed, is meant our Redeemer Himself, the Eternal Son of God. How it is the Jews recognised Him for the Son of God, is not so easily seen; since, we are assured, they would not have crucified Him, had they known it (1 Cor. ii.), and "*they had slain the Author of life in ignorance*" (Acts iii. 15-17).

But, all the words of a parable are not to be applied in their strict sense. Hence, these words may be understood to mean, that they had sufficient evidence, from the testimony of the Baptist, who proclaimed Him to be the Son of God, and from the doctrine and miracles of our Redeemer Himself, to know Him to be such; and hence, although "*their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God*" (Wisdom ii. 21, &c.), still, they may be said to know Him to be the Son of God in a certain sense, inasmuch as they had the clearest evidence to this effect, and, it is owing to their own voluntary blindness, they did not expressly know Him. It may be also said, that the princes did know Him; for, the texts from 1 Cor. ii., and Acts iii. 17, only prove, they did not know *the wisdom of the mystery* of His death, or the consequences that were to follow from it.

When, then, He came to demand the fruits of the vineyard, the fruits of penance and good works, which redounded to God's glory, and which His Father expected (John xv. 8), they conspired amongst themselves, and resolved to put Him to death, in order to keep "*His inheritance,*" that is, in order to retain the hold they had of the people; to secure the emolument and reverence resulting therefrom to themselves, without any regard to the glory of God. They had also in view, to prevent the Romans from coming, "*and taking away their place and nation.*" They preferred subjecting Him to death, who preached the truth, rather than embrace the truth which He preached. The celebrated passage from chapter ii., verses 12-20, of the Book of Wisdom, which is understood by all the ancients to refer to the outrage committed by the Jews against our Blessed Lord, throws great light on the preceding exposition. In fact, it almost describes beforehand what is recorded in the Gospel. The impious are there represented as conspiring against the *just man*, since he is "*contrary to their doings, and upbraided them with transgressions of the law,*" &c. Hence, they say, "*if He be the true Son of God, He will defend Him,*" &c. Hence, they are represented as doubting our Lord's Divinity. Similar are the words of the Jews, St. Matthew (xxvii. 42), "*if He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross,*" &c.

But although they should have regarded Him as the Son of God, from His miracles and doctrine, from the testimony of the Prophets, still, "*their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God*" (Wisdom ii. 21, 22).

39. "*They cast him out of the vineyard,*" &c., is allusive to the mode in which our Redeemer was put to death, outside the gates of Jerusalem. (Heb. xiii. 12, &c.)

40, 41. "*They say to him: He will bring these evil men,*" &c. This is the conclusion for which the parable was chiefly intended. This menaced ruin was inflicted by Titus here, and will be inflicted by the demons of hell hereafter. St. Luke (xx. 15, &c.), says, it was our Redeemer said this, and the Pharisees answered, "*God forbid.*" Both accounts are true. Most likely, the Pharisees answered, as is stated here by St. Matthew, not seeing the tendency of their answer; and our Redeemer repeated this answer, and approved of it, as is stated by St. Luke, so that they perceived, from His manner of expressing it, its full application, and the sentence they had unconsciously pronounced against themselves. Hence, on perceiving this, they replied, "*God forbid,*" meaning to repudiate the application of the parable to themselves, and the punishment entailed by the crimes referred to. They could not deny the wicked dispositions they were in regarding the murder of the Son of God, the Heir of the vineyard. For, St. Luke says, they "*sought to destroy Him*" (xix. 47).

The words, "*He will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen,*" &c., as St. Chrysostom remarks, denote the reprobation of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. However, they more immediately regard the Doctors of the Law, on the one hand; and the Apostles and the first teachers of the Gospel, on the other; to whom the vineyard was to be let to cultivate it, and to present the expected fruit in due season. This fruit was exhibited in the conversion of the entire world to the faith, and to a life of Christian sanctity, and in the heroic constancy of so many virgins and martyrs. It also, in a certain sense, regarded each soul in particular; since, every one is bound to labour, by good works, to save his own soul, and by cultivating this spiritual vineyard, to edify his neighbour. It is let to each one of us, on condition of bringing forth fruit in due time, according to the several circumstances of life in which we may be placed.

TEXT.

42. *Jesus saith to them: Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? By the Lord this has been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes."*

43. *Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof.*

44. *And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.*

45. *And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they knew that he spoke of them.*

46. *And seeking to lay hands on him, they feared the multitudes: because they held him as a prophet.*

COMMENTARY.

42. The connexion of this with the preceding can easily be seen, when we look to the reading of St. Luke (xx. 16). It arises out of their repudiation of the conclusion drawn in verse 41, as applicable to themselves, "*God forbid*" (Luke xx. 16),

although, indeed, the same is implied in the interrogative form used by St. Matthew here, and by St. Mark, "*Have you never read?*" &c. Our Redeemer, looking on them, in order to add to their confusion, with an air of stern severity, refers them, in proof of the truth and applicability of the conclusion they would fain reject and deny, to the SS. Scriptures, in the knowledge of which they gloried; and He shows that in these same Scriptures, that was predicted which they denied, they said, "*God forbid,*" viz., that they would reject Christ, the Son of God; that they would be destroyed, and the vineyard transferred to other hands. The first and third points He shows here; the second, viz., that they would be destroyed, He shows in verse 44.

"*The stone which the builders rejected.*" Our Redeemer exhibits the same idea under the different similitudes, of *workmen, vine-dressers, labourers*. Here, the idea is borrowed from that of architects. This latter is frequently employed by St. Paul. (1 Cor. iii. 9, &c.)

By "the stone rejected by the builders." is meant, as we are informed by St. Peter (1 Ep. ii. 4, &c.), our Lord Himself. The idea is, that, like a stone cast aside as worthless by the builders of one edifice, and made the chief binder, the corner stone in another; Christ was rejected by the Pharisees and Doctors of the Old Law, in the building up of the synagogue and house of God, of which they were the chief builders; but, He was chosen by God to be set in Sion with honour, as the chief corner and foundation stone. This He became, when He united two peoples in one, connecting and cementing them in His Blood, reconciling them by His Cross. There is a tacit opposition conveyed here between God's selecting Him, and men's rejecting Him.

"*By the Lord this has been done,*" as if to say, this economy in assigning the honourable place in the building of His Church to Christ, who had been rejected by the Jews, the builders of the synagogue, was not accomplished by man, as it was in opposition to human power; but, against all human exertions, it was brought about by the power of God alone, who, by an admirable disposition of His providence, made the malice of His enemies the means of exalting Christ; thus, drawing good out of evil. It is all divine. The means employed are altogether independent of human strength or wisdom. Hence, this admirable display of Divine power and wisdom, through means, humanly speaking, weak and foolish, "*is wonderful in our eyes,*" that is, in the eyes of the believers, who regard Christ, crucified and rejected, as "*the wisdom and power of God*" (1 Cor. i.) This transferring of the Gospel to the Gentiles—a mystery hidden for ages in the bosom of God (Eph. iii. 9), and unknown even to the Prince of the Apostles himself, till he was shown it in the vessel let down from heaven, in the form of a great linen sheet, &c. (Acts x. 11)—is what was "*wonderful in their eyes.*"

43. In this verse, without any ambiguity whatsoever, He directly applies to them this parable, as well as the two preceding ones, of the disobedient son and wicked husbandmen, and He points out the punishment of their obstinacy and ingratitude. "*Therefore,*" as the direct consequence of the fulfilment of the Scripture testimony, that the stone which was to be made the head of the corner, was rejected by them, and as a punishment of their ingratitude, "*the kingdom of God,*" viz., all the marks which distinguished them as the people of God, having God for their king, viz., the ceremonies of the Old Law, the sacrifices, the temple and city of Jerusalem, which constituted the glory of the entire Jewish nation, were to be destroyed. The words, "*kingdom of God,*" may also refer to the Church, where God reigns, by faith and grace, which is the entrance to heaven, where He reigns in glory, as also the Gospel law and privileges, whereby the dominion of the devil is destroyed. These "*shall*

be taken away from you," and in order to excite their jealousy the more, "*given,*" or transferred, by the gratuitous goodness of God, "*to a nation yielding the fruits thereof,*" that is, to a nation, to whom, by a mysterious dispensation, the ingratitude and infidelity of the Jews would be made the occasion of imparting God's grace, and of rendering them His chosen people. "*The fruits thereof,*" that is, of the kingdom of God.

44. It is clear, the different parts of this verse denote a fall of greater or lesser destructiveness. They have reference to the punishment of greater or lesser magnitude, to be inflicted on the Pharisees, whom our Redeemer here addresses. The idea is borrowed from frail, brittle vessels, to which men are sometimes compared in SS. Scripture, as well here as elsewhere, either falling from a lofty eminence against a hard rock, or upon which a rock falls from some lofty elevation. The injury done in the former case is not beyond all hopes of reparation; while, in the latter case, when the stone falls on the brittle object, the ruin is supposed to be irreparable, and the object broken in pieces. In these words, our Redeemer proves against the Pharisees one of the points denied by them, when they cried out, "*God forbid*" (Luke xx. 16), viz., that they would be utterly destroyed.

Commentators are not, however, agreed as to the precise meaning of the words, and difference of the two antithetical members of the sentence. By those, "*who shall fall upon this stone, and shall be broken,*" some, with Jansenius, &c., understand those who, in this life, haughtily raising themselves against this mystical stone, wish to despise it and trample it under foot, thus injuring only themselves, both in mind and body. This injury, however, is not of such a nature as not to be reparable by penance. This class refer to the persecutors of the name of Christ, who enter on a course very injurious to themselves, and impossible as regards success. To them apply the words, "*durum est tibi contra stimulum caleitrare.*" By those, "*on whom it shall fall and grind them to powder,*" they understand, those on whom God shall execute His vengeance from heaven, without any hopes of reparation. This was illustrated in the utter ruin and dispersion of the Jews by Titus; and it will be illustrated in a still clearer way, when, on the last day, He shall consign the reprobates to everlasting flames. The idea of designating utter ruin by the breaking of earthen vessels, is frequent in SS. Scripture. (Isa. xxx. 14; Jer. xix. 11, &c.) Others understand the words, "*whosoever shall fall on this stone,*" to refer to the class who were scandalized at our Redeemer when here on earth; at His poverty, humiliation, and doctrine. Such were those to whom He was speaking. They fell against this Divine stone, and were broken before God, owing to their pride and envy. On the other hand, by those on whom it fell, utterly "*grinding them to powder,*" are meant, those who, after our Redeemer's death and ascension into heaven, obstinately resisted His doctrine and the truth of His resurrection. Such were the Jewish Doctors in opposing the Apostles, in persecuting them, now that our Lord sat in heaven at the right hand of His Father. Upon these and their children, the weight of His vengeance and rigorous justice had fallen from the height of heaven. This was exemplified in their utter destruction by Titus; and their dispersion as vagabonds on the face of the earth unto the present day.

Others think, that to "*fall on this stone,*" means, incredulity, the refusal to believe in Christ. To these unbelievers, He is a rock of offence. This is the meaning attached to the words, rock of offence by St. Paul (Rom. ix. 33; 1 Peter ii 7, 8) By the words, "*on whomsoever it shall fall,*" these understand, the coming of Christ from heaven to judge them irrevocably, and condemn them to the frightful punishments

of the life to come, as if the whole verse meant: they shall be miserable in this life, and shall undergo the first death, who refuse to believe in Christ; "*whosoever shall fall . . . shall be broken*;" and they shall be more miserable still in the life to come, where "*this stone shall fall*" upon them, "*and grind them to powder*," when Christ shall condemn them to the second and everlasting death (Apoc. ii. 20; vi. 14, &c.; xxi. 8).

45. From our Redeemer's significant manner and gestures, as also from the Scriptural quotations, they understood Him to speak of themselves.

46. Far, however, from being seized with holy fear, and falling down and adoring Jesus Christ, as they should have done, they were blinded with malice, and planned His destruction, which they accomplished three days after.

The preceding parable, although directly addressed to the Jews, whose ingratitude to God had provoked the most signal chastisements, temporal and eternal, is still pregnant with instruction for all Christians, who have reason to apprehend like punishment, should they also be guilty of like crimes, by proving unfaithful to grace, and by not rendering the fruits of justice and sanctity in due time. This dreadful judgment has, in fact, unhappily, been executed on entire kingdoms, who have lost the faith. And the same has happened, and happens every day, to private individuals, who, in punishment of their obstinacy and neglect of God's grace, are left to themselves, and delivered over to a reprobate sense. God frequently sent the Jewish people His holy Prophets to instruct them; His heavenly lights and inspirations to point out their duty, and stimulate them to perform it. These they repeatedly spurned, which ended in their trampling under foot the Son of God, and crucifying Him. Christians act a similar part, when they commit mortal sin, and offer an affront to the Spirit of Grace. The grace which is denied these haughty, ungrateful souls, is bestowed on the meek and humble of heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Redeemer conveys, under the figure of a royal nuptial feast—to which, those who were invited in the first instance, refused to come, nay, even maltreated and abused the king's messengers sent to repeat them—the rejection of the Jews, their utter and irreparable ruin, and the vocation of the Gentiles, represented by those who, in crowds, obeyed the invitation and filled the banquet hall. He next represents to us, the holy fear with which even those of His Church should work out their salvation, in the sad punishment of the man who, though within the banquet hall, was found not to have the nuptial garment of charity and persevering grace to the end (1-14). We have next an account of our Lord's consummate prudence in His reply to the captious and insidious question of the Pharisees, touching the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cæsar, thus utterly crushing them and reducing them to silence (15-22). He next, in reply to an objection of the Sadducees against the doctrine of the Resurrection, founded on a case warranted by the Law of Moses, which, in their minds, would prove the utter absurdity of this doctrine, shows their objection to arise from the ignorance of the power of God, and the Sacred Scriptures; and He then proves the doctrine of the Resurrection (23-34). In reply to the question of a Pharisee, "a Doctor of the Law," who came to tempt Him, He says, that the great commandments of the law, which are an abstract of all the duties it prescribes are, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour (34-40). Our Lord, in turn, becomes interrogator. He questions the assembled Pharisees, in presence of the people, whom He means to instruct regarding the Divinity of their Messiah, and shows, from the Psalms of David, the utter absurdity of regarding Him in any other light than that of being God. While He was David's Son, He was infinitely David's superior. The utter confusion which His question caused the Pharisees, saved Him from any further captious questions in public (41-46).

TEXT.

AND *Jesus answering, spoke again in parables to them, saying :*

2. *The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son.*

3. *And he sent his servants, to call them that were invited to the marriage : and they would not come.*

4. *Again he sent other servants, saying : Tell them that were invited : Behold, I have prepared my dinner ; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready : come ye to the marriage.*

5. *But they neglected, and went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise.*

6. *And he sent laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously put them to death.*

7. *But when the king had heard of it, he was angry, and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city.*

8. *Then he saith to his servants : The marriage indeed is ready : but they that were invited, were not worthy.*

9. *Go ye therefore into the high ways ; and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage.*

10. *And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good : and the marriage was filled with guests.*

11. *And the king went in to see the guests : and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment.*

12. *And he saith to him : Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment ? But he was silent.*

13. *Then the king said to the waiters : Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

14. *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "**And Jesus answering.**" The word, "*answer*," by a Hebrew idiom, means, to commence speaking ; to continue a discourse, introducing something new. It does not always suppose a preceding question calling for a reply. Here, it conveys, that no way daunted by the well-known designs of the Pharisees, our Redeemer continues to speak to them, and takes occasion, from their feelings, which He well knew, to point out, in the following parable, the rejection of the Jews, the call of the Gentiles, and the final reprobation of the evil doers, who, although of the Church, persevere in bad works to the end. It might be said, too, that He "*answered*," to the latent thoughts of the Pharisees, "*in parables.*" It is disputed whether the following parable is the same as that mentioned (Luke xiv. 15, &c.), there being several circumstances in which they agree ; and several in which they differ. Some commentators, among whom are St. Augustine, St. Gregory, Jansenius, &c., say, they are quite different ; that they were uttered under different circumstances. The parable referred to in St. Luke, was spoken when our Redeemer had been at table in the house of one of the Pharisees, and spoken on occasion of an observation made by one of the guests ; whereas, the parable here, was spoken in different circumstances. Moreover, the characters referred to are quite different ; the messengers despatched in the two parables, quite different, &c. Others, with St. Irenæus, &c., whose opinion is held by Maldonatus, say, there is reference to the same parable in St. Luke and here. The

substance and scope in both are the same ; and the circumstances in which they differ, so trivial, that they merit no consideration. The difference of circumstance of time and place, is accounted for in this way : St. Luke records facts accurately ; whereas, St. Matthew, although remarkable for quoting our Redeemer's *words* more fully than the other Evangelists, is not very particular in detailing the order of events ; and hence, often anticipates or postpones events in his narrative, being more desirous of fully recording our Redeemer's words. Here, then, he quotes this parable, although uttered under other circumstances ; because, it suited those whom our Redeemer was now addressing.

2. "*The kingdom of heaven*," viz., the Church of Christ, which is the long expected kingdom of the Messiah, in which He reigns over angels and men, subject and obedient to His spiritual rule. Hitherto, men were in servitude ; but, now, the faithful are gifted with true spiritual liberty, under the sway of a spiritual King. It is also called "*heavenly* ;" because all its ordinances, gifts, privileges, are from heaven ; its destination, and the end to which it tends, is heaven.

"*Is like to a king*." It is not the *kingdom*, but, rather, the *King* of heaven, that is like a king. Hence, the words mean : something occurs in the founding and extension of the Church, like unto what is represented in the following parable of the *king and the marriage feast*.

The literal meaning of the parable needs no explanation. Hence, we have only to point out its application. The king who instituted the marriage feast, refers to the Heavenly Father, whose eternal "*Son*," Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time, being born of the Father from eternity, was born as man, of the Virgin, in time, and united to Himself the nature of man.

"*The marriage*," refers, not to the nuptial union, but to the marriage feast (v. 4, &c.), to the graces, the Sacraments of the Church ; above all, to the Sacrament of the adorable Eucharist ; to the Word of God, by which the soul is nourished, all of which will lead to the enjoyment of those delights in store for the sons of God, who shall be inebriated with the abundance of God's house, and for ever drink of the torrent of His delights (Psa. xxxv. 9). By His assuming human nature, and afterwards redeeming us by His death, our Redeemer espoused His Church, and united her to Him by Faith, Hope, and Charity, here ; which is to be followed by a closer union in the fruition of bliss, hereafter. The feast consequent on this nuptial union of Christ, comprises all the blessings of soul and body resulting therefrom, both in this life and in the next. It is quite usual, in SS. Scripture, to represent the covenant of God with man, under the figure of a marriage feast. (Isa. liv. 6 ; Jer. iii. 8 ; Matt. xxv. 5 ; John iii. 29 ; 2 Cor. xi. 2, &c.) The allusion here to the mystical union of Christ with His Church, supposes a magnificent feast, such as marriage feasts, especially of kings, were amongst the ancients.

3. The "*invited*," most likely, refers to the Jews, who had long since been invited by their Prophets and the Law of Moses, to prepare for the rich banquet, which in the time of the New Law, was to follow the Incarnation of the Son of God. The *servants sent* to call in those who *were already invited*, most probably refer to John the Baptist, and the Apostles, who, before the death of our Redeemer, invited the Jews to do penance, as "*the kingdom of heaven was at hand*." St. Jerome reads, *servant*, in the singular. But, as it was most likely taken from St. Luke (xiv. 17), the reading here is the more probable. The phrase, calling "*those who were invited*," is allusive to a custom very prevalent, of issuing a more precise invitation, on the eve of a marriage.

to the friends, who were before informed, in a more general way, of the event to take place at some period not then defined. "*And they would not come.*" The Jewish people resisted these gracious calls and invitations. As the king is said (v. 4), to send out "*other servants*" a second time, which are generally understood to refer to the Apostles; hence, some commentators understand, by the servants referred to in this verse (3), John the Baptist, and our Redeemer Himself, who was a servant, according to human nature. As, however, the servants sent on both occasions would seem to be different from the king's son, of whose marriage there is question, it is better to adopt the former interpretation; for, the same Apostles may be regarded as *other servants*, inasmuch as they were sent on *another and different* occasion. Moreover, they were different men after the descent of the Holy Ghost, and they had associated to them parties who did not preach before the death of Christ, viz., Paul and Barnabas.

St. Chrysostom understands the servants, to refer to the latter Prophets; and John the Baptist, who pointed out Christ as already come, and His kingdom now arrived. Our Redeemer Himself, may perhaps, be included, since, in one respect, He was a servant, and He personally invited all: "*Come to Me all ye that labour,*" &c.; and also, when He commanded them to eat His flesh and drink His blood, which is the most precious banquet ever destined by God for man.

4. "*Other servants.*" This, most probably, refers to the period after the death of Christ, when He sent His Apostles and Apostolic men to invite the Jews again to the banquet. St. Chrysostom comments on the folly of the Jews, whose refusal necessitated this second mission of the king's servants. After having slain his son and heir; after having spurned and refused the invitation of a king, and that to a banquet, which refusal was calculated to enrage him; still, such is the goodness of this Heavenly King, that He repeats His invitation, telling them, "*all things are ready.*" The invitation is not to sufferings, crosses, and afflictions; but, to pleasures and delights, at the very time they deserved punishment for the murder of His Son. No doubt, all who will take on them the yoke of Christ, will have to suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12); still, our Redeemer Himself declares, that His "*yoke is sweet, and His burden light;*" and the Psalmist invites all to "*taste and see that the Lord is sweet.*"

The "*fattings and bees,*" refer to the precious viands prepared in a style of royal magnificence for the numerous guests invited to the royal marriage; for more than one many "*fattings are killed.*" This, may refer, in a special manner, to the death of Christ, and the institution of the adorable Eucharist, which took place between the first and second sending out of His servants. "*All things are ready,*" refers to the manifold and superabundant spiritual effects of the death of Christ, in the removal of obstacles, by His victory over the devil; in His throwing open the gates of heaven; and in the abundant graces now dispensed, of which the Holy Ghost plentifully dispensed by the Apostles, was a sure earnest and foretaste.

"*Come ye to the marriage.*" What infinite goodness and condescension on the part of our good God, whose happiness was no way affected by their coming or staying away.

5. The neglect and indifference with which they treated the invitation of the king, not heeding it, but merely attending to their ordinary business, clearly exhibit, the dispositions of the Jews in regard to embracing the faith of Jesus Christ, after He had shed His blood for them. Plunged in earthly cares, and grovelling in their attachment to temporal concerns—which is a distinguishing characteristic of that

unhappy race even to the present day—they undervalued the price of Redemption, and preferred frivolous and passing pleasures, to the solid and permanent joys of a celestial banquet.

6. Some of them went so far as to maltreat and abuse the king's messengers. This exhibits the ingratitude of the Jews in a still clearer light, inasmuch as, having been *invited* long beforehand, and having promised to come to the nuptials, now, when everything is prepared, at immense sacrifice and cost, they kill the servants sent to call them.

The bad treatment received by the Apostles at the hands of the Jews, is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. They show still greater brutality than those did, who are referred to in the parable of the vineyard; for, these slew only the men who demanded the fruit of the vineyard, whereas, the others slew those who demanded nothing of them, but merely invited them to partake of the greatest enjoyments and delights.

How often do we not act similarly, crucifying again the Son of God by our sins, and exposing Him to mockery, refusing to enjoy His heavenly banquet. This, in a special manner, applies to those Christians, who refuse to approach Holy Communion; engrossed in worldly business and the distracting cares of temporal interests, or, indulging in illicit pleasures, they crucify again the Son of God; and we should tremble the more, as we have not the excuse the Jews had, viz., the folly and scandal of the Cross of Christ, to estrange and deter us.

For, we know, that He has triumphed by His Cross; and having been crucified according to the weakness of the flesh, He now lives by the power of God, seated at His right hand.

7. "*When the king had heard of it*" This is spoken conformably to the parable; as also are the words, "*He was angry*;" since the supreme King, knew of Himself, in virtue of His omniscience, all that happens; nor is He ever changed or moved to anger, save in the sense of inflicting punishment, as is done by an angry man.

"*And sending His armies*," &c. This has evident reference to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years after, by the Romans under Titus and Vespasian. They are called "*His armies*;" because, they were mere instruments in the hands of God, to execute His judgments. (See Isa. xiii. 4, 5, &c.; Jer. xxv. 9, &c.) It was "*He sent*" these armies. It was *He* destroyed, by their instrumentality, without their knowing it, "*those murderers, and burnt their city*." Josephus, describing the fearful miseries endured by the Jews in the last siege of Jerusalem, tells us, 1,100,000 persons were destroyed, and the city utterly ruined (Lib. 6, c. 9, de Bello Judaico). This might be regarded as a *prophetic parable*, which was fulfilled to the letter. The temporal punishment inflicted on the unhappy Jerusalem, is but a type of the excruciating tortures which, in the next life, the enemies of God are doomed to suffer for ever in hell.

8. "*Then*," after the Jews, who were invited first, had rejected and spurned the grace of the Gospel, "*He saith to His servants*," the Apostles, whose invitation the Jews had rejected.

"*Were not worthy*," implies more than is expressed. It means, that they rendered themselves positively unworthy, by their incredulity and resistance to grace. For, the Gentiles who were admitted into the Church, *were not worthy*;

but, they did not place such obstacles to grace as did the Jews. (Rom. ix. 30, &c.) The mysterious economy of God in calling the Gentiles only, when the Jews had rejected the Gospel, and in making their fall the occasion of the call of the others, is fully explained by St. Paul (Rom. xi., &c.); and, also, Acts xiii. 45, &c.

9. But, although the first invited refused coming, still, the banquet would not be left unattended. "*Highways*" ("*exitus viarum*," Vulgate), are understood by some, to mean the places where many roads meet, and whence many roads branch off. These are generally the places most crowded—places of public resort. Others understand by them, the *outlets* of the main streets from the city into the country. In the parable, the words refer to the most distant and remote nations of the Gentiles, "*in omnem terram*," &c. (Psa. xviii.) "*Eritis mihi testes*," &c. (Acts i. 8.)

"*And as many as you shall find*." No exception, no distinction—Jews or Gentiles. Greeks or barbarians. To all they are debtors. To all they owe it, to invite them to the king's banquet.

10. They invited them, without distinction or exception—"good and bad." Since all are "*bad*," before their call, the words mean, they invited all, without distinction, from every class and rank of life, from every tribe, tongue, people, nation, sex, and profession. Or, the words may refer to the different degrees of moral character, which exist among Pagans themselves. For, among Pagans, some may be morally good, *v.g.*, Cornelius the centurion, and others, "*who by nature, do those things that are of the law*" (Rom. ii. 14); or, at least, there are "*good and bad*" among them, according to their own notions and opinions. The words may also refer to the condition they were in after their vocation and aggregation to the Church; and thus would show, that there are wicked men even in the Church, as is expressed, verse 11.

"*And the marriage was filled with guests*," refers to the fulness of the Gentiles, who entered the Church after the Jews had refused entering, whose incredulity was made the occasion of the call of the former.

11. The entrance of the king "*to see the guests*," is literally allusive to the usage observed by exalted personages, when they give splendid entertainments, of going in to see how all things appear, how it fares with their guests, and whether all things are conducted in a way worthy of such an occasion. In the application, it refers to the judgment of God, whether particular, at death; or, general, at the end of the world, as appears from the punishment (v. 13). Our Redeemer introduces this, to prevent any false feelings of foolish confidence on the part of the Gentiles, who were introduced after the Jews were rejected; since, it will not suffice to be in the Church to gain salvation. Many of the children of the Church may be reprobates and lost.

"*And He there saw a man*," a certain person sitting down with the other guests.

"*Wedding garment*," cannot refer to faith; since, he could not be there without it. By faith, and the sacraments of faith, he entered the Church. To come to the feast is, to believe, as those who did not come did so, because they did not believe. Hence, the word means, *charity*, which was the disposition in which Christ Himself united to Him His Church; and, therefore, the corresponding disposition

which each one should carry with him. Charity it is, that "*that covers a multitude of sins.*" Charity it is, with the want of which St. John charges the Bishop of Ephesus, and the want of which rendered displeasing to God, the Bishop of Laodicea. It is charity that renders us beautiful in the eyes of God.

Others understand by it, a spotless, holy life, free from gross sins, adorned with all virtues and good works. This it is, that constitutes the putting on of Christ (Rom. xiii. 14; Coloss. iii. 12); the putting on of the new man (Eph. iv. 14); the newness of life (Rom. vi. 4); the new creature (Gal. vi. 15). This, however, comes to the same as the preceding interpretation, since charity cannot exist without a good life and meritorious good works; nor can these exist, in the sense now referred to, without charity. Hence, "*the nuptial garment,*" embraces all, viz., charity, good works, and a truly Christian life. This shows, that faith alone, without good works, will not suffice for salvation.

12. "*Friend, how camest thou hither?*" This form of address, shows the reproach Almighty God will make to the members of His Church, who, having abused the friendship shown them, and having insulted Him after all the marks of friendship and love exhibited by Him, deserve hell. It also shows, that God punishes them, from a sense of justice, rather than from a feeling of hatred.

"*He was silent,*" conveys to us, that at the hour of death, or on the Day of Judgment, the light of God's justice shall so dazzle the reprobate, and place the crimes they concealed from man in so manifest a light, that they cannot either deny or palliate them. The angels and men at judgment, shall be witnesses, says St. Jerome, of the sins of those whom the Divine justice will condemn: "*nec negandi erit facultas, cum omnes Angeli et mundus ipse sit testes peccatorum. Illuminabit abscondita tenebrarum et manifestabit consilia cordium*"

13. "*The waiters,*" the Angels, who are to execute the decrees of Divine justice.

The "*binding of hands and feet,*" denotes the inevitable punishment in store for them, in "*exterior darkness,*" &c., which refers to the eternal torments of hell, where they shall be for ever shut out from the sight of God, and the brilliant light of the supper hall; and consigned in a darksome dungeon to excruciating tortures, denoted by "*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" In speaking of "*exterior darkness, weeping,*" &c., our Redeemer passes, as sometimes is His wont, from the parabolical form of expression, to the thing denoted by the parable.

14. "*For, many are called, but few are chosen.*" This is the conclusion which our Redeemer draws from the foregoing parable. At first sight, one would imagine the conclusion, from the rejection of only one out of so many guests, ought to be, *although many are called, only few are rejected.* Some expositors, among them, St. Augustine, say, that this one who was rejected, was a type, and representative of those who are rejected, who are many, and more numerous than those who are saved, since, "*broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter thereat;*" whereas, but few enter the narrow gate. The scope of the parable, according to this, is to show that, besides the many who altogether refuse entering the Church, even of those who enter, some are lost. That our Redeemer designed to make the man in question, a representative of those many, who, being called, are still rejected, appears from the general conclusion He draws from the parable.

Others assert, that the conclusion is drawn from the *entire* foregoing passage,

and comprises both the vast multitudes, who refuse entering the Church, and those who, being in the Church, do not lead lives worthy of their vocation, nor persevere to the end, and are thus rejected. Then in this interpretation, both the justness, and truth of the general conclusion are quite evident, since, if we include among those called, all who remain outside the Church, Jews and Pagans, and all who, being in the Church, do not lead edifying lives, it is clear, the damned are many, and the saved comparatively few. Others say, that the conclusion, as well as the entire parable, refers to the Jews, of whom many were called, but few embraced the faith at the preaching of the Apostles; and our Redeemer casually introduces, at the end of the parable, verse 11, the case of one of those who entered the Church, and was still lost, to show those who are members of the Church, and the Gentiles, who are called, that they had no reason to glory against the Jews; since, not all that are called and enter the Church are saved, which is sufficiently verified and exhibited by the fate of only one, in the Church, because he had not "*the wedding garment*," was not clothed with the robe of charity and sanctifying grace.

TEXT.

15. *Then the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to insnare him in his speech.*

16. *And they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of men.*

17. *Tell us therefore what dost thou think, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?*

18. *But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said: Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?*

19. *Show me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny.*

20. *And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this?*

21. *They say to him, Cæsar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: and to God, the things that are God's.*

22. *And hearing this they wondered, and leaving him went their ways.*

COMMENTARY.

15. "*Then the Pharisees consulting*," &c. From the other Evangelists it would seem it was those whom He had been addressing previously, viz., the Chief Priests and ancients (xxi. 23), that did so. However, the Pharisees were included in the others, and especially under the term, "*Scribes*." But the Pharisees are in a special manner said to be the instigators or concocters of this scheme, to insnare our Redeemer, both, because they were most hostile to Him, and among them, especially the following captious question was agitated. Instead of being struck with feelings of dread at the punishment menaced by our Redeemer, and conceiving feelings of true sorrow, they become more hardened in their iniquity, and endeavour to insnare Him.

16. "*They sent their disciples*"—St. Mark, "*some of the Pharisees*" (xii. 13); St. Luke calls them, "*spies*" (xx. 20). They do not question Him themselves, as they were well known to Him, and their object would be at once seen through. They join with these some of their own disciples, whom they supposed to be unknown to our Redeemer. "*The Herodians*." Who these were, cannot be known for certain. Some say, they refer to that class among the Jews, who were in favour of paying tribute to Cæsar, and they were called "*Herodians*," after Herod, who, being the creature of

the Romans, favoured their cause, and promoted it by all possible means. These the Pharisees bring with them to consult our Redeemer on this delicate and agitated question, in order to insure His denunciation to the Roman authorities, in case He expressed an opinion against the payment of taxes (Luke xx. 20). Others say, they were the soldiers and domestics of Herod Antipas, who was then at Jerusalem, on the occasion of the celebration of the Pasch. Others say, they were the public officers, appointed by Herod, to collect the Roman tribute in Judea. Others maintain, that they belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, whose doctrines were embraced by Herod. Finally, it is maintained by others, that they formed a peculiar religious sect among the Jews, who maintained, that Herod the Great was the Messiah, the sceptre having in his time passed from the tribe of Juda (Gen. xlix. 10). Herod favoured this class very much. In order to uphold these false notions, he slew the holy Innocents, and built a magnificent temple, rivalling that of Solomon.

"Master," &c. Full of deceit and dissimulation, they approach our Redeemer with affected feelings of the greatest respect, and they address to Him the language of the grossest flattery, thus hoping to throw Him off his guard, and to elicit from Him the desired answer, unfavourable to the payment of tribute. *"Master,"* signifies not only a teacher of the law, but a leading personage vested with authority. *"True,"* i.e., sincere, candid, *"speaker."* *"The way of God,"* that is, the will, the law of God, which conducts us to God, to grace, and glory. *"In truth,"* without any admixture of error. *"Neither carest Thou for any one,"* &c., that is, Thou art not afraid of any one, however powerful, so as to be deterred from courageously announcing the truth. In this it is insinuated, that others were deterred, by the fear of Cæsar, from giving utterance to their real sentiments, on the subject of paying tribute to the Romans.

"Not regard the person of men." For the meaning of having *"respect of persons"* (see Rom. ii. 11), where it is shown, that in His dealing with men, God can never be liable to this charge. In these hollow, hypocritical praises, bestowed by the Pharisees on our Divine Redeemer, they pronounced their own condemnation; for, if He were such as they affected to believe, why reject His teaching.

17. The question proposed by the Pharisees was a most captious one, and calculated to involve our Redeemer in a dilemma, whichever answer He would give. If He answered in the negative, that it was not lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, then, the Herodians were present to give evidence against Him to the Governor (Luke xx. 20), and charge Him with preaching sedition and disaffection to the reigning authorities (Luke xxiii. 5). If He replied in the affirmative, then they would render Him odious with the people, who hated the rule of the Romans, and regarded it as unbecoming in the people of God, to be subject, or pay tribute to infidels and unbelievers. They would thus damage His ministry, by bringing it into disrepute; and by charging Him with favouring the hated dominion of the Romans, they would endeavour to show, that He was indifferent in regard to the spiritual interests and exalted privileges of the people of God; that, far from having any claim to be considered their true King, their long-expected Messiah, He was only a false Messiah, the enemy of the Jewish people. The discussion about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, originated about thirty years before this, with a certain Judas of Galilee. History clearly attests the cause that gave rise to the subjection of the Jews to the Romans, and the consequent payment of tribute to them. The disputes for the office of High Priest, between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, the nephews of Simon, the High Priest, who was brother to Judas Machabeus, caused them to solicit the mediation of Pompey, then at the head of the Roman armies in the East. Pompey having

adjudicated in favour of Hyrcanus, the elder of the two brothers, Aristobulus resisted both Hyrcanus and Pompey. The consequence was, that Hyrcanus, being of himself unable to maintain his power, handed it over to the Romans, and this cession was ratified by the chief men among the Jews, such a course being, in their minds, the only safeguard against anarchy and bloodshed. Pompey imposed a tax, which, although not a fixed annual one, was to be paid occasionally, according to the wants of the Republic, whenever it was exacted by the Romans. It was only in the time of Augustus, after the enrolment under Cyrinus, about the period of our Redeemer's birth, that this casual taxation was changed into a fixed annual tax, levied by capitation, to be paid in coin, bearing the same and image of the reigning Emperor. The imposition of this tax, in connexion with subjection to the Romans, was by no means relished by the Jewish nation. Hence, in the time of Augustus, about thirty years before this, a certain Judas of Galilee (Acts v. 37; Josephus, Lib. 18, Antiq.), raised the standard of revolt. He asserted, that it was unworthy of the people of God, the true sons of the faithful Abraham, who owed tribute to God alone, to be subject, or pay taxes to infidels and idolatrous Gentiles. Both himself and his followers all perished, at the hands of the Romans. However, the spirit he evoked had, to some extent, survived him, and no question was more fiercely agitated among the Jews, than whether or not, it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar. The Pharisees and the bulk of the people, held the unlawfulness, as far as they could securely do so. The Herodians and the followers of the Romans, on the other hand, maintained its lawfulness. This sect of Galileans, followers of Judas, had raised several tumults in Judea, and provoked the chastisement of the ruling powers. It is to them, most likely, allusion is made (Luke xiii. 1). It was in vindication of their false and erroneous principles, that, after this, they rose in rebellion against the Romans, which ended in the utter ruin of their chief city, and the irreparable destruction and dispersion of the Jewish race, under Titus and Vespasian. Our Redeemer and His Apostles, being Galileans, might readily be suspected of favouring the false principles of this Judas. Hence, our Redeemer, by His own example, and the teaching of His Apostles, inculcates so clearly the obedience due to temporal powers (Rom. xiii.; 1 Peter ii. 13).

18. "*But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said,*" &c. Our Redeemer shows Himself superior to the artifices whereby it was sought to entrap Him. They thought to insnare Him by their false, hollow professions of respect, and by captious questions. On the other hand, He exposes their hypocrisy, while, in affecting to exhibit respect for Him, and to ascertain the truth, they only wished to lay snares for Him. They were thus quite different from what they pretended to be. "*Ye hypocrites.*" Hence, showing His omniscience, He exposes their inmost thoughts, and proves that He Himself was, in reality, what they affected to believe Him to be—a truthful, fearless teacher, who is not deterred by any persons from announcing the truth, as He does here in regard to them.

"*Why do ye tempt Me?*" to give utterance to sentiments opposed to the submission due to the ruling powers in the State; or, rather, why desire to catch Me in My words, while affecting respect for Me, and a desire of knowing the truth?

19. "*Show me the coin of tribute,*" that is, the coin which Cæsar exacts in tribute from each person. The other Evangelists (Mark xii. 15; Luke xx. 24), say, He told them to bring Him "*a penny*;" but, probably, these Evangelists expressed themselves thus, because a penny, or *denarius*, was the coin showed to our Redeemer;

although, most likely, He expressed Himself, as is here described by St. Matthew. "*The coin of tribute*" was a certain description of money which the Roman Emperors got struck off, as the coin to be paid in tribute. It was a penny, a Roman *denarius*, and, most likely, it was of a larger or smaller size, according to the amount levied on each individual. This coin must have come from the Roman mint, inasmuch as the Jews would not have impressed the image of any man, according to their law, much less of a Pagan and idolater, on any of their coins. It was silver; for, we are informed by Pliny (Lib. 33, c. 3), that the Romans exacted tribute in silver, not in gold. The value of this *denarius*, in our currency, is not easily ascertained. Those who hold that in (c. xvii. 23) there is question of a tax paid to the Romans, say, that the *didrachma*, being nearly equivalent to two *denarii*, the tax demanded of each was a penny or *denarius* doubled, or two *denarii*, unless we say, that the size and value of each *denarius* varied, according to circumstances, and that Tiberius got struck off *denarii*, to be paid by the Jews, of a size equalling two *drachmæ* each. So that, according to the increase or decrease of the tribute, *denarii* were struck off, of lesser or greater size and value. But, as we maintained, that in c. xvii., there is question of quite a different tax, the question does not concern us.

20. The image of the reigning princes was usually stamped on the current coins of their respective realms, as we find to be now the universal practice. Our Redeemer, although He already knew whose image was impressed, now asks the question, partly with a view of having them solve their own question, by the answer He would elicit from them; and partly, to show that earthly wealth was of no concern to Him.

21. "*Cæsar's.*" Tiberius Cæsar, who was then in the eighteenth year of his reign.

"*Render, therefore, to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's,*" &c. This would seem to be a conclusion suggested by the exhibition of tax money bearing, impressed on it, the image of Cæsar; a conclusion evidently insinuating, although not expressing it, that tribute might lawfully be paid to Cæsar; for, their question was not, whether it was their bounden duty, or whether it was an obligation on them to pay tribute to Cæsar. Hence, in His answer, He altogether abstracts from the fact, whether the Romans were their lawful sovereigns, or had acquired a just, legitimate dominion over them or not. The question was, whether the Jews, the chosen people of God, were justified in paying tribute to infidels and idolaters. It arose out of the heresy propounded by Judas and his followers, regarding the privileges of the Jews, and their exemption from earthly sovereignty, as the chosen people of God. Hence, they ask, is it "*lawful to give?*" &c. Our Redeemer's answer embraces the question expressed, and its implied reason, and, without directly answering their question, He so frames His reply, as to utterly baffle them, and confound their malice.

Some say, that our Redeemer's answer means, that it *was* lawful to pay this tribute. "*Give to Cæsar.*" No doubt, this is implied, and easily inferred; but, still, the admiration which His answer elicited (v. 22), evidently shows, the Pharisees, &c., did not regard Him as expressly saying so; for, He would have thus fallen into the snare they laid for Him, and incurred the odious alternative, intended by them, of rendering Himself obnoxious to the people.

The connexion of our Redeemer's conclusion, "*Render, therefore, unto Cæsar,*" &c., and the mode in which it is deduced from the foregoing is differently explained. According to some, by the very fact of the Jews using the money, stamped with the Emperor's image, and this for the purpose of paying tribute, "*numisma census,*" they

acknowledged themselves to be Cæsar's subjects; and, hence, they should pay him tribute. This reasoning does not seem conclusive to others (although there is some force in the words, "*numisma census*") inasmuch as one nation may, for commercial purposes, use the money coined under the sovereign of a different State, as the Jews, most likely, used Roman as well as Greek coin, before their subjection to the Romans. Hence, they explain it thus: As the money they used was Roman coin, there can be nothing unlawful, or opposed to the law of God, in giving back, "*rendering*" "*reddite Cæsari*," &c., to the Romans, Roman coin. The question proposed, regarded not the claim of Cæsar to receive tribute, but the lawfulness of giving it to him, on the part of the Jews.

Our Redeemer, at the same time, in order to meet the charge of neglecting the interests of God's people, to which the foregoing answer might render Him liable, adds, "*and unto God the things that are God's*," in which He would seem tacitly to hint, that the Pharisees were quite indifferent about the interests of God, the paying Him tithes, &c., rendering honour and reverence, which seemed to cause them so much anxiety, and in defence of which they affected to have some scruples about paying tribute to Cæsar.

Others (among the rest, Jansenius Iprensis), hold, that no inference can be drawn from our Redeemer's answer, as to whether tribute was to be paid to Cæsar or not.

As the Pharisees insidiously proposed to Him a captious question, with a view of insnaring Him, He, therefore, avoids giving them any definite answer; and He so shapes His reply, that they could not infer what the things were which they should pay unto Cæsar, whether it was tribute, or honour, or obedience; at the same time, He propounds Cæsar's rights, whatever they were; and thus, without involving Himself with the Jews, or running counter to their prejudices on the subject of paying tribute (for in the words, "*the things that are Cæsar's*," He makes no mention of tribute), He avoids coming in collision with the temporal authorities. Neither can they deduce anything definite from His answer to the second part, "*and unto God*," &c.

One conclusion, however, is clearly deducible from our Redeemer's words, viz., that the discharge of the obligations, due to temporal authority, is by no means inconsistent with those we owe Almighty God, or His Church, which is His direct, immediate, and supernaturally constituted representative on this earth, and *vice versa*. All Christians, of whatever rank, order, or degree, who are not themselves the occupants of supreme power, owe, without exception, civil allegiance to secular authority, and are bound to discharge the duties which it entails, be the occupants of power, Pagan or Christian, Protestant or Catholic; and this, not only from fear of punishment, but also from motives of conscience. However, this duty of obedience, which is entailed by civil allegiance, has its limits. (See Rom. xiii.; Titus iii.; 1 Peter ii. 13; Commentary on.) Circumstances may also arise where, under certain conditions, resistance to civil authority, and, if necessary, the deposition of unjust, tyrannical rulers, even of these legitimately established, is allowable. (See Murray, "Annual Miscellany," vol. ii.) These conditions, it is generally agreed upon, are—

1. If the tyranny be excessive and intolerable.
2. If it be manifest to men of probity and good sense.
3. If the evils actually endured exceed those that would ensue from resisting and deposing a tyrant.
4. If resistance be the only available means to get rid of tyranny and its evils.
5. If there be a moral certainty of success.

But, as these conditions are seldom found to concur; hence, *practically*, it is but very rarely allowable to have recourse to the extreme remedy of resistance to legitimately constituted authority, even when acting tyrannically. (See St. Thomas, Lib. 1, de regimine Principum;

also 2^{da} 2^{dæ} Quest. 42, Art. 2, ad 3^m; St. Augustine, Lib. 17; de civitate Dei, et de Unit. Ecclesiæ, c. 21; Suarez, De. fid. Lib. 6, c. 4, &c.)

The Church, the Divine spouse of Christ, united to her Divinely-appointed head, who is the vicegerent of Christ on earth, on whom has been bestowed the full power of binding and loosing, and the exceptional privilege of infallibly deciding questions of faith and morals, should be regarded as the direct guardian of the interests of God. From him she derives, directly and immediately, all the powers and privileges which He supernaturally bestowed on her. The duty of obedience we owe her, as the immediate representative of God, belongs to another order, and is different from that which we owe temporal authority. The civil authority of the State, and the spiritual authority of the Church, are independent in their respective spheres; confined to their proper bounds, they can never clash. Both come from God, who assigns to each its proper limits, its distinct rights and prerogatives. In the words, "*render unto God the things that are God's*," temporal rulers and governors are restrained from intermeddling in the spiritual concerns of God and His Church. If they do, they are to be regarded as detestable tyrants; and their ordinances, particularly if they enjoin anything opposed to the law of God, and the inalienable independence of His Church, are to be disobeyed as a matter of duty, and resisted, at the sacrifice of personal liberty, of all the goods of fortune, nay, even of life itself. Of this, the history of the Church in all ages, furnishes us with the most edifying examples, in the persons of those fearless champions, who regarded life itself of little value, when the defence of the liberties of the Church, and the interests of religion, were in question. At this very moment, is not the entire Church edified by the fearless intrepidity exhibited by the aged prisoner of the Vatican, whose unchanging reply to every insidious overture that might compromise the liberties of the Church, and the rights of the Holy See, is "*non possumus*;" and of those holy confessors, the victims of German despotism, who, from the depths of their prison cells, bear testimony to the truth?

The words, "*render unto God the things that are God's*," forcibly remind each individual of his obligation to observe the Commandments, and execute the holy will of God, so as to render his soul agreeable in His sight, and so to cultivate all its faculties as to promote, in all things, the greater glory of God. As "*the coin of the tribute*" was stamped with the image of Cæsar, which showed his claim to the payment of tribute; so, have our souls impressed upon them God's image and likeness, assimilated to Him in their spiritual power, and reflecting Him in the *triple* faculty of memory, understanding, and will. All the faculties, therefore, of our souls, all their operations, should tend to God, in whom alone, after all the sorrows, and turmoil, and warfare of this life, they are ultimately to find eternal rest, peace, and happiness. Have we so disposed all our thoughts, words, and actions, as to render them subservient to God's greater glory? Have we rendered unto God, in the several circumstances of life, all that are "*His*?" All things that we have are from Him, therefore, all that we have or are, should be, in turn, referred back to Him.

22. "*They wondered*," at the wisdom He displayed in fully answering their question, while He, at the same time, escaped the snares laid for Him, and the consequences of the dilemma in which they meant to involve Him, thus verifying the words of Scriptures, "*there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord*" (Prov. xxi. 30); "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise*," &c. (1 Cor. i. 19); "*Their foot hath been taken in the very snare which they hid*" (Psa. ix. 16).

TEXT.

23. *That day there came to him the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection : and asked him,*

24. *Saying : Master, Moses said, " If a man die having no son, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up issue to his brother."*

25. *Now there were with us seven brethren : and the first having married a wife, died ; and not having issue, left his wife to his brother.*

26. *In like manner the second, and the third, and so on to the seventh.*

27. *And last of all the woman died also.*

28. *At the resurrection therefore, whose wife of the seven shall she be ? for they all had her.*

29. *And Jesus answering, said to them : You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.*

30. *For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married : but shall be as the Angels of God in heaven.*

31. *And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God saying to you :*

32. *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

33. *And the multitudes hearing it, were in admiration at his doctrine.*

COMMENTARY.

23. The Sadducees, far from profiting by the discomfiture which the Pharisees suffered at our Redeemer's hands, endeavoured to involve Him in a difficulty. The history and doctrines of this sect have been already explained (iii. 7). They were a sort of free thinkers, sensual materialists in matters of religion. They denied the immortality of the soul, and, consequently, the resurrection of the body (Josephus, Lib. 18, Antiq. c. 2). They denied the existence of angels and of spirits (Acts xxiii. 8). They could conceive no other state save that of sensual, carnal indulgence. As the Pharisees inclined to the tenets of the Platonists and Pythagoreans ; so did the Sadducees, to those of the Epicureans. They were thought less of by the people than were the Pharisees, to whom they were opposed. Though hostile to the Pharisees, they still join them in opposing our Divine Redeemer. Their wicked example in this, has been too faithfully copied by heretics in every age, who, while tearing each other in pieces, are sure to unite in opposing the Church of God. Having heard our Redeemer preach the doctrine of the Resurrection, and inculcate penance and sanctity of life, as necessary to enjoy promised happiness in the world to come, they now cite a case, either real or fictitious, which, in their minds, clearly demonstrated the absurdity of the doctrine of the Resurrection.

24. "*Moses said*" (Deut. xxv. 5), "*if a man die,*" &c. This custom existed even before the time of Moses, as is clear from the case of Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Juda. (Genesis xxxviii.) The motive of this law was, to console the dying, by satisfying the desire natural to all, of leaving a representative after them ; or, in other words, of living in the persons of their sons, and of retaining their inheritance without confusion. This law was not to be confined to brethren only ; it extended to very near relations, as appears from the Book of Ruth.

"*And raise up issue to his brother.*" The first-born son was to be called by the name of the deceased brother, and to be regarded as his heir and representative, "*that his name be not abolished out of Israel*" (Deut. xxv. 6).

25-27. This may have really happened, or it may be only imaginary. In any case it would answer the intended purpose just as well.

28. "*In the resurrection.*" At the resurrection of the dead, when the seven brothers and their wife shall, according to our Redeemer's teaching, rise again, and during the eternity which is to succeed.

"*Whose wife shall she be of the seven?*" &c. The Sadducees thought to confound our Redeemer by this question; whatever answer He gave, they supposed, would show the absurdity of the doctrine of the Resurrection. If He said, she should be adjudged to only one; then, the others who married her in succession, would be wronged. Such a decision would be the source of discord and divisions, and envy, on the part of the six others, each of whom would seem to have an equal right to her, in the other life. For, the carnal and sensual Sadducees supposed that, after the Resurrection, men lived with their wives, as in the present life. If He said, she belonged equally to all, then our Redeemer's doctrine would savour of the most incestuous and unnatural concession.

Or, if He said, she would belong to neither, then, they would suppose it a great hardship that these seven men, who acted in obedience to the law in espousing this woman, should lead single lives, while others were allowed to live with their wives, in the life to come.

29. St. Chrysostom remarks, that our Redeemer, in His reply, does not reproach the Sadducees, as He did the Pharisees (v. 18), because, although they were, to some extent, influenced by malice; still, ignorance, on this subject, was their predominant failing. Hence, He charges them with error, not with hypocrisy, and merely says, "*You err,*" in denying the Resurrection, and in being ignorant of the manner of its accomplishment; since, they supposed that things would be there just as they exist here. Hence, they denied it altogether. Their error arose from a two-fold source, viz., from their ignorance of "*the Scriptures,*" from which they quote so flippantly, and which clearly establish the doctrine of the Resurrection; and from not knowing "*the power of God,*" since, being unable to conceive how the same bodies could be resuscitated after putrefaction, looking merely to natural causes, ignoring God's Providence and Almighty Power, they looked upon the effects of God's power as no greater than those produced by the ordinary laws of nature. Hence, they understood the doctrine of the Resurrection, in a metaphorical sense, like those heretics referred to by St. Paul (2 Tim. ii. 17).

30. He first treats of the latter source of error, and answers their chief ground of objection, by a reference to the state of things different from the present, brought about by the power of God, which will effect, that, although the same bodies, the same flesh, as to substance, shall be resuscitated; still, these bodies shall be endowed with glorious qualities, as is described by St. Paul. (1 Cor. xv.) Although they shall have the same members, the same flesh; still, these members and this flesh shall be freed from the baneful consequences of sin. They shall be freed from animal wants and inclinations. Everything in these bodies shall be subject to the soul, and the soul shall be subject to God, and ingulfed in the excess of His boundless bliss. They shall be partakers of the sovereign beatitude, in a manner so admirable, that our Redeemer compares them to "*the Angels of God in heaven.*" This is what He wishes to convey to the Sadducees, when He says, "*they know not the power of God.*"

"*Marry nor be given in marriage,*" refers to both sexes. The men shall not

"marry" women; nor shall the women "*be given in marriage*" to men. The propriety of the Latin language is not strictly observed in the Vulgate, in the translation from the Greek. For, although *γαμῶσι* applies to men as well as women, still, "*nubent*," is generally applied to women; we are told, however, by Nonius Marcellus, that "*nubo*," applied indifferently to men and women. The true meaning of the phrase is that now given. St. Luke (xx. 36), adds, as a reason, "*for they cannot die any more*," in allusion to the reason of the ordinance of Moses (Deut. xxv.), which had for object, to succour human mortality, and repair the losses occasioned by it. When death shall be swallowed up in victory, then, shall the object of marriage cease.

"*But shall be as the Angels of God in heaven*," as regards immortality, perfect beatitude, purity and freedom from all the passions, appetites, wants, and desires of animal life; but, not so in every respect, or, as regards the possession of flesh or bodies, since the just shall have the same bodies, but with quite different qualities and attributes; whereas, the Angels have no bodies at all. The comparison is confined to the point at issue, regarding marriage, and carnal gratification in the life to come. St. Luke adds, "*they are children of God, being the children of the resurrection*" (xx. 36), and, as such, free from all passions, sure of a blessed immortality, which shall render marriage altogether unnecessary.

31. "*And concerning the Resurrection*," &c. In proof of the Resurrection, or, that the dead shall be raised again, "*have you not read that which was spoken by God?*" (Exod. iii. 6-16.) Having refuted their objection to the Resurrection, founded on the gross error they were in regarding the state of things after it, caused by their depreciation of, or rather, disbelief in the power of God, our Redeemer now undertakes to prove the doctrine of the Resurrection from the same portion of SS. Scripture, the writings of Moses, on which the perplexing case already quoted, was founded, and shows, that they were ignorant of the Scriptures, from their boasted knowledge of which they derived their objection against this fundamental doctrine.

32. "*I am the God*," &c., that is, the protector and bountiful rewarder "*of Abraham*," &c., the celebrated ancestors of the Hebrews, whom I now commission you to liberate (Exod. iii. 6).

"*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living*." The common Greek is, "*God is not the God of the dead*," &c. The reasoning of our Divine Redeemer is this: In addressing Moses, and vesting him with authority, to lead the Hebrews out of the Egyptian bondage (Exod. iii. 6), God declares Himself to be, at the time He spoke "*to Moses, at the bush*" (Mark xii. 26; Luke xx. 37), the God of Abraham, Isaac, &c., although they had died long before then. He does not say, "*I was the God*," &c.; but, "*I AM the God*" (for, this is implied in the original Hebrew, where the personal verb is wanting), to denote eternity and undying existence. Now, "*God is not the God of the dead*," &c. Therefore, Abraham, &c., are still alive with God—"for, all live to Him" (Luke xx. 38)—since, the relations of protection and remuneration existing between them and God, which is the meaning of the words, "*I am the God of Abraham*," &c., could not subsist if they were not existing. Hence, they must now exist, and consequently rise again. For, their existence as to their souls would be only a half, or imperfect existence, inconsistent with the protection and remuneration which God, whose works are perfect, extends to them, when, He calls Himself their "*God*." Now, if *they* rise again, the same must apply to *all others*. Their resurrec-

tion shows, the existence of a future state. Objection—But, even supposing that the Patriarchs would never rise again, might they not, still, be said to be “*living*,” as to their souls? Hence, He might be called their God.

The answer is twofold (Jansenius Iprensis)—1st. When it is said, He is “*the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*,” by Abraham, &c., are meant, not mere disembodied souls, existing separately; but, men, composed of soul and body. Hence, they exist, both as to soul and body, before God. For, supposing the decree of God to reanimate their bodies, as the interval between their death and resurrection is so short, that it might be called a mere sleep, which is often said of death in the SS. Scriptures (Matt. ix. 25; John xi. 11), their bodies, although dead to us, may be said to *live* before God. Hence, St. Luke (xx. 38) says, “*they all live to Him*,” just as Adam, after God’s decree of death was pronounced against him, might be said to be *dead*, before God, since his dissolution was soon to take place. In this sense, our Redeemer would immediately prove the resurrection of the body, taking the words, “*Abraham, Isaac*,” &c., to designate their persons, composed of soul and body. Our Redeemer, by the word, “*living*,” means, full, perfect life of the entire man; full, perfect life, worthy of God, the great author of life and source of happiness, whose works are complete, and whose rewards exceed all merit. Now, God in calling Himself “*the God of Abraham*,” &c., conveys, He was their bountiful rewarder, and would make them perfectly happy. But, this perfect happiness implies perfect, entire life, of soul and body. For, a man existing only as to his soul, could only be said to be half existing. Hence, to insure perfect happiness and full existence, worthy of God, the body must again be resuscitated and united to the soul.

2ndly. Others reply thus: They say, our Redeemer employs an argument founded on the teaching and tenets of the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul. According to them, the soul became extinct with the body (Josephus, Lib. 18, Antiq. c. 2). Now, as our Redeemer establishes the existence of the *souls of Abraham*, &c., because, God calls Himself their God; hence follows the resurrection of their bodies, the form of their souls, which would be ever kept in a violent state without their bodies. The Sadducees and the Philosophers, who denied the resurrection of the body, denied the immortality of the soul; while, on the other hand, those who admitted the immortality of the soul, admitted the resurrection of the body. Hence, from the denial of the resurrection of the body, St. Paul (1 Cor. xv.) infers, the annihilation of the soul; and the Holy Spirit (2 Machabees xii. 44), infers, that prayers for the departed would be of no use unless the dead rose again.

Whatever interpretation may be put upon the passage, matters but little; or, rather, in whatever way we may endeavour to explain the reasoning and deduction of our Divine Redeemer, matters but little, so far as our accepting His conclusion is concerned. He says that the words of God to Moses prove the resurrection of the body. That is enough for us. He might have adduced other texts, in which the resurrection would seem to be more clearly referred to. (Isa. xxvi. 19; Dan. xii. 2, &c.) But, most likely, He preferred quoting from Moses, as it was from Moses the Sadducees sought to confound Him. Some, moreover, say, that the Sadducees admitted the Books of Moses only. This is denied by others, nor is there any clear evidence on record, that they rejected the other books; as, in that case, they would have been clearly heretics, and treated as such by the Jews, and excluded from the synagogue, where the Psalms of David were sung and the Books of the Prophets read (Luke iv. 16; Acts xiii. 15); whereas, we find some men of that sect occupying the highest spiritual offices among the Jews. Ananias, the High Priest, was a Sadducee (Acts xxii. 12). So were other High Priests too.

33. "*When the multitude heard this,*" that is, His answer to the Sadducees, "*they were in admiration of His doctrine,*" His solid, ready, and prudent reply to these questions which caused others such perplexity. They admired His use of Scriptural quotations in proof of His teaching, and also His doctrine concerning the future state of the resuscitated, regarding which they, most likely, were imbued with erroneous notions. For, though maintaining the doctrine of the Resurrection, the Pharisees, probably, misunderstood the manner of existence that followed it, which they supposed to be carnal; whereas, our Redeemer shows it to be a state exempt from all the necessities of animal life, and free from all carnal indulgence, like unto that of the Angels in heaven. St. Luke (xx. 39) says, "*some of the Scribes*" commended our Redeemer's answer to the Sadducees. St. Mark (xii. 32) says, one of them commended His teaching, after He had replied to the following question regarding the love of God. This St. Luke omits, as he had recorded a similar question and its answer (x. 25). The words of St. Luke (xx. 40), "*after that they durst not ask Him,*" &c., may either refer to the Sadducees, or, if it refer to all, it has reference to the period subsequent to His answer to the following question.

TEXT.

34. *But the Pharisees hearing that he had silenced the Sadducees, came together :*
 35. *And one of them a doctor of the law asked him, tempting him :*
 36. *Master, which is the great commandment in the law ?*
 37. *Jesus said to him : " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."*
 38. *This is greatest and the first commandment.*
 39. *And the second is like to this : " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."*
 40. *On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.*

COMMENTARY.

34. "*Silenced.*" The original word, "*ἐφύμωσε*," literally signifies, "*to put a muzzle on their lips.*"

The Pharisees had heard that He silenced the Sadducees. From this, St. Matthew leaves us to infer, that although the Pharisees were glad of the discomfiture of their opponents, the Sadducees, still, they did not imitate the people in their admiration of our Redeemer; on the contrary, stung with envy at His success, and forgetful of their own shameful defeat on the question of the tribute, they hope to confound Him by their subtle questions, and to lower Him with the multitude. "*They came together,*" to deliberate about the question they, in their turn, would propose, as the Sadducees had done already.

35. "*And,*" at their instigation, "*one of them* (the Pharisees) *a doctor of the law,*" whose occupation it was to expound the law. St. Mark (xii. 28) says, He was "*a Scribe.*" Hence, a Pharisee might sometimes be a *Scribe*. "*Asked Him, tempting Him,*" that is, making an experiment whether He would answer his question on the practical precepts of the law, as well as He had answered the Sadducees on a speculative point; for, "*He had heard them,*" our Redeemer and the Sadducees, "*reasoning together*" (Mark xii. 28). Most likely, he interrogated our Redeemer, not so much in a captious spirit, as with a view of obtaining information, "*seeing that He had answered them* (the Sadducees) *well.*" Hence, our Redeemer says of him (Mark xii. 34), "*thou art not far off from the kingdom of God.*" Others think, he commenced in an evil, captious spirit. Hence, they take "*tempting,*" in a bad sense; but, that he left, better disposed (St. Chrysos. in Matth. Hom. 72).

36. "*The great commandment*," that is, the *greatest* commandment among those propounded by Moses, compared with which others are not *great*, the commandment whose fulfilment is most agreeable to God. The Hebrew has no superlative; hence, the Greek phrase here partakes of the Hebrew idiom. The interpreter (v. 38) renders it, the *greatest*. It is observed by Ven. Bede (in Matth. xii.), that it was a question much debated among the Scribes and Pharisees, which was the greatest commandment among those delivered by Moses, some giving a preference to those which related to the offering of gifts and sacrifices. Hence, they placed them before those that related to honouring our parents (xv. 4, 5, &c.). Others gave the preference to the precepts, which had immediately for object, the love of God and of our neighbour. Hence, the Scribe praises our Lord's answer on the subject (Mark xii 32-34).

37. "*Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord*," &c. In Mark (xii. 29), our Redeemer quotes, in substance, from Deut. vi. 4, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God*." (In Deut. it is, "*the Lord our God is one Lord*"), as if to convey, that the faith in God, as *Lord* of all things, would lead us to love Him above all things; and as "*ONE God*," would show, He alone was to be loved in this supreme way. Hence, to be loved "*with our whole (undivided) heart*." This *oneness* has reference to the Divine nature. The word, for "*Lord*," is *Jehovah*, derived from the verb, *to be*. It has, therefore, reference to the Divine nature. The plurality of persons is insinuated in the triple repetition—1st, "*the Lord*;" 2nd, "*thy God*;" 3rd, "*is one God*." Similar are the words of the Psalmist, "*Benedicat nos Deus, Deus noster, benedicat nos Deus*." "*Deus noster*," is put in the second place, because by His Incarnation, the Second Person is peculiarly our God. The same is observed in the words of Deuteronomy (vi. 4), "*the Lord (1) our God (2) is one Lord*" (3).

"*Thou shalt love*," is the same as an imperative form, *love thou*. "*With thy whole heart*," &c. In Deuteronomy (vi. 5) it is, "*with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength*." The words, "*with thy whole mind*," are omitted. In Mark (xii. 30), Luke (x. 27), four members are expressed—"thy whole heart, thy whole soul, thy whole mind, thy whole strength." Some expositors distinguish these several members, and endeavour to assign to them a distinct meaning. St. Thomas (2^{da} 2^{ae} Article 4), by the *heart*, understands the *will*; and by the three others, the principles of action, which are moved by the will, viz., the *intellect*, signified by the "*mind*;" the *inferior appetite*, expressed by "*soul*" (ψυχή); and the *external power* of action, denoted by "*strength*." Hence, God is to be so loved by us, that our entire intention should be borne towards Him (*ex corde*); our intellect subject to Him; our sensual appetite regulated according to Him; our entire external course of action obedient to Him, and rendered conformable to His will and precepts. Others give different significations to the several members of the sentence; but, the general and more commonly received opinion is, that it matters but little whether there be four or only three members in the sentence; that there is no use in seeking for a distinct meaning for each, since they all signify the same as the words, "*with thy whole heart*." They are added, and the same idea conveyed in different words, to intensify the sense. For, that in the words, "*with thy whole heart*," all the others are included, appears clear from this, that in SS. Scripture, at times, the words, "*with thy whole heart*," alone are employed to express the great love of God; at times, a second member only is added, "*from thy whole soul*," to express the same thing; and sometimes a third member, "*with thy whole strength*." Thus, David is said to have followed the Lord "*with his whole heart*." (3 Kings i.) Josias (4 Kings xxiii. 3)

made a covenant for the people, that they would keep His commandments, "*with all their heart, and with all their soul;*" and he himself is said (verse 25), to have "*returned to the Lord with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his strength.*" Hence, these several words are used, or rather, the same idea is expressed in different words, for greater emphasis' sake. For, the word, "*heart,*" embraces the affections, expressed by "*soul;*" and *intellect*, expressed by "*mind*" (*διανοια*); and, moreover, in order that a man could be said to do a thing "*with all his heart,*" he should use his utmost exertions, as far as his strength would allow. Hence, is added, "*with all thy strength.*" The whole precept may be, then, summed up briefly, in the words, "*thou shalt love the Lord . . . with thy whole heart.*" The question next is, what these words mean. They certainly cannot refer to our actually and constantly loving God with all the energies of our soul, so that we should be constantly engaged in acts of love, that we should love nothing but Him, and love Him as much as He deserves to be loved. In this sense, the precept can only be fulfilled in the life to come. In this sense, we can only hope to arrive at the love of God, as the term of our fruition in heaven. In this sense, it might be suited to the angels; but, it would be impossible for us, poor weak mortals here on earth. It is in this sense, that St. Augustine, speaking in certain portions of his works, both of this precept of loving God, and of the precept, "*thou shalt not covet,*" says, they are not accomplished in this life, but only to be fulfilled in the life to come. The most probable meaning of them, then, is, that our love of God should be *comparatively* supreme; that we should be so habitually disposed, that we would bestow our love on no object opposed to God; that we would share His love with no other being, but love every one else for Him; that we should love Him, not merely with our lips, but with our hearts, unlike those who loved Him with their mouth, but their heart was not right with Him. (Psa. lxxvii. 36, 37.) We should, then, love Him from our heart, and our *entire* heart, not coldly nor remissly, nor with a divided affection. 2ndly. It should be *finally* supreme. In other words, God should be the *ultimate* end of our actions, so that we should observe all His ordinances, and refer all we do to His honour and glory. Hence, we should love what He loves; love whatever tends to His honour, and hate and detest whatever is an obstacle to His glory, whatever derogates from it, whatever offends Him. 3rdly. It should be *appreciatively*, not *intensively* supreme. In other words, we should not appreciate or value anything else in creation, so much as God. We should be prepared to make any sacrifice, be it of life, fortune, friends, &c., sooner than do anything opposed to His love. This may be regarded as a general precept, prescribing not only internal acts of love, to be exercised now and then, but habitual love, and external acts as well; the same as is conveyed in the second precept regarding our neighbour, whom we are to love in "*work and truth.*" For, on these two, our Lord says, "*dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets;*" so that a man may be said to fulfil the precept when He retains *habitual* love in all his actions, wishes for, and does nothing contrary to, the love of God.

38. "*The greatest.*" In the Greek it is, ἡ μεγάλη . . . εντολη—"the great . . . commandment." But the interpreter conveyed the sense; since, the love of God "*with our whole heart*" has, for object, the most important and noblest virtue—the end of the entire law. From it spring the virtue of religion, and all the moral virtues. It is also the "*first,*" the most exalted in dignity and excellence; since, its object is God Himself, the first and supreme Good.

39. "*The second,*" not in order of legislation— for many other precepts were issued

before it by God—but, in point of importance and dignity, “*is like to this.*” He does not say, *equal* to it; but, *like* to it in its object, which is, love; in point of dignity; in its mode of accomplishment; in its comprehensiveness, being a practical compendium of the precepts of the second table of the law, as the love of God, with our whole heart, is of those of the first. Our Redeemer answers more than He was questioned about. He not only tells what is “*the great commandment,*” but, in order to deliver the entire doctrine, in a brief form, regarding the greatest *commandments*, one of which depended on the other, one of which cannot be observed without observing the other; and, moreover, in order to show them, that they could not rest satisfied with loving God, and indulge in excessive love of self, while, at the same time, they neglected their neighbour—He thus meant to cure their inordinate self-love—nay, to show the grievousness of the hatred they bore His own Divine person, He adds, what is the next commandment in point of dignity. As in the foregoing precept, of loving God, He points out two things as requisite, viz., the love of God, and its *mode* (*ex toto corde, &c.*), so, also, in this, which is found in Leviticus (xix. 18), He prescribes the love of our neighbour; and again, its *mode*, viz., *as we love ourselves*. He does not command us to love him as *much* as we love ourselves, or to the *same degree*, but, in the same manner. St. Thomas (2^{da} 2^{ae} Quest. 44, Art. 7) says, this mode is, to love him, *sancte*, that is, for God’s sake, as we ought to love ourselves for God’s sake; *juste*, that is, we ought to love him in what is good, not loving him in reference to evil things; *vere*, for our neighbour’s sake, and not for our own. The mode of loving our neighbour “*as ourselves,*” may be said to consist in this, that, as we love ourselves, following the dictates and judgment of right reason, in such a way as to wish for all that would really promote our good, and tend to our final happiness, and would wish to remove from ourselves, and avert the evils that would obstruct these ends and objects; so, in like manner, we should also wish to promote our neighbour’s good, and avert from him the evils that would really injure him, and obstruct his present *natural* enjoyment and future happiness. This is clearly expressed in a positive form by our Redeemer (Matt. vii. 12), “*all things whatsoever you would that men would do to you,*” &c. In this He explains, in what the precept of loving our neighbour consists, “*For this is the Law and the Prophets.*” Similar are His words here (verse 40), “*On these two commandments dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets.*” Similar are the words of St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 8). The same precept of loving our neighbour, or rather, the mode of its fulfilment, is conveyed in a negative form by Tobias (iv. 16), “*See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another.*”

It is supposed here by our Redeemer, that our love of ourselves is within due bounds, not excessive, nor tending to objects which might be unlawful or finally ruinous; for, He first supposes we love God as we ought, in which love of God is contained the love of ourselves. This latter, our Redeemer does not here prescribe, but pre-supposes. For, if we love not God, or love ourselves otherwise than for God, we hate ourselves; as it is, on the other hand, in the love of Him that the greatest and most perfect love of ourselves consists. Hence, our Redeemer calls the love of our neighbour the “*second,*” and not the third, commandment; since, the love of ourselves, which He supposes, is contained in the love of God. The inordinate, excessive love of ourselves, is guarded against in the first precept, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,*” &c. In this the proper love of ourselves, which is the model of the love of our neighbour, is supposed. As the words, “*thou shalt love,*” &c., in the precept, relating to God, implies, not merely acts of love at times, and habitual feelings of love at all times, with the exclusion of all feelings opposed to this love; but also, its

practical manifestation by good works; so the same applies to the words, "*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*," &c. They convey to us, that we are not merely to elicit acts of love of our neighbour at times, and entertain habitual feelings of love for him at all times, exclusive of hatred or any feelings opposed to the love of him; but also, that we should practically manifest the sincerity of this love in our actions, since it is thus we love ourselves. We should endeavour to promote whatever advances his temporal or spiritual interests, and remove whatever would obstruct them. As the love of God is shown by keeping the Commandments; so, is the love of our neighbour tested and manifested by works—"Let us love, not in word or in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18).

In a word, the love of our neighbour, *like* unto that which we bear ourselves, should be such, that we would do, in his regard, whatever we should reasonably expect to be done to us, and treat him as we would reasonably expect to be treated by him, in the same circumstances.

40. "*On these two commandments dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets.*" By "*the Law and the Prophets*," are meant, the contents of the entire Old Testament. The Jews understood, by "*the Law*," the Books of Moses, and by "*the Prophets*," all the other books, viz., Kings, Paralipomenon, Psalms, &c. The meaning of the words is, that in these two precepts, of loving God and our neighbour, are contained, summarily, as conclusions in principles or in their premises, all the precepts given by God to man, which are briefly summed up in the Decalogue. These two precepts are the epitome, and brief compendious summary, of the whole Scriptures, of all the other precepts of God, whether *positive* or *negative*. The precepts regarding God are contained in the *love of God*; hence, to this the first three precepts of the Decalogue, contained in the first table of the Commandments, have reference. The precepts regarding our neighbour, whether *positive* or *negative*, are contained in *loving our neighbour as ourselves*. To it the several precepts of the second table of the Decalogue have reference. Hence, St. Paul says on this subject, that "*love* (of our neighbour) *is the fulfilling of the Law*" (Rom. xiii. 10).

On these two precepts all the others "*depend*." They hang from them, as branches from the main trunk of a tree. All the works of mercy, and the precepts of the other virtues, natural and supernatural, are referred to these two precepts, of the love of God and our neighbour. The precepts of faith, hope, charity, and religion, are contained in the precept of the love of God. The precepts of justice, truth, fidelity, mercy, gratitude, &c., are contained in the precept of the love of our neighbour (A. Lapide). Our Redeemer here intimates to us, that we should always keep these precepts before our eyes, and that to them we should refer, and by them regulate and guide all our thoughts, words, and actions. In Deuteronomy (vi. 5-9), the same is expressly enjoined in reference to the great precept of loving God.

TEXT

41. *And the Pharisees being gathered together Jesus asked them,*
 42. *Saying: What think you of Christ? whose son is he? They say to him: David's.*
 43. *He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call him Lord; saying:*
 44. *"The Lord said to my Lord, sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool?"*
 45. *If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?*

46. *And no man was able to answer him a word: neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.*

COMMENTARY.

41. "*The Pharisees being gathered together*" (see verse 34, where the object of their assembling is expressed). From St. Mark (xii. 35), it appears it was in the temple, where Jesus was teaching, this occurred. "*Jesus asked them,*" viz., the Pharisees, who boasted so much of their knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. After they had exhausted all their useless, captious questions, our Redeemer, now seeing them assembled before Him, becomes interrogator in turn; but, His question, far from being captious or useless, had for object, to instruct the entire people in the necessary, saving faith, in His own Divinity, without which it would be impossible to please God, or be justified. As He had in His answer to their question, pointed out the rule of conduct they should follow; so here, He proposes, what they should believe. The Pharisees had repeatedly made it a subject of accusation against Him, that He made Himself the Son of God, notwithstanding the clearest evidence of miracles adduced by Him in proof of this fundamental truth (John v. 18; x. 33; xix. 7; viii. 58). Our Redeemer now proves, from SS. Scripture, that the Messiah was not merely a man, or a mere earthly conqueror, who would extend the kingdom of Israel to the ends of the earth, and raise it to a state of earthly grandeur, magnificence, and glory, of which its condition, under Solomon, was a mere shadow, as the Jews believed and expected; but, that He would be God also.

42. "*What think you of Christ?*" &c. In Mark (xii. 35), Luke (xx. 41), the question is proposed in a different way, as if our Redeemer asked, not in the *second* person, as here, "*What think you of Christ?*" but in the *third* person, "*How do the Scribes (Luke, 'they') say, that Christ is the son of David?*" But, there is no difference in sense. Most likely, St. Matthew gives the precise mode in which the question was put to them in the second person; but the other Evangelists, without precisely giving the identical words, give the sense; for, many of the Pharisees were Scribes, or, at least, they answered according to the teachings and opinions of the Scribes. Or, it may be said, that our Redeemer, having asked the Pharisees, as here, "*what think you . . . whose son is He?*" They answered, the Scribes or Doctors of the Law say, He is the son of David; and then our Redeemer asked, as in Mark, "*How do the Scribes say, that Christ is the son of David?*" The answer is ascribed to the Scribes, the Doctors of the Law and expounders of the SS. Scripture; since, it was not clearly or expressly stated in SS. Scripture that He was the son of David, but only implied and deduced from Scripture by reasoning. In Isaias (viii.) it is said, He was to sit on the throne of David. In Micheas (v.) it is said, He was to be born in Bethlehem, &c. Our Redeemer's object in proposing this question was, to confute the opinion of the Scribes regarding the paternity of Christ. For, although He was really, according to the flesh, the son of David; still, He was not exclusively so, as they imagined. He wishes to enlighten them on His Divine nature and eternal generation; and from the very SS. Scriptures which they themselves admitted, He proves that He must be more than mere man; more than the mere son of David. For, as such, He would not be David's superior or "*Lord.*" No son, as such, is the superior of his own father. From the fact of David calling Him *his* "*Lord,*" it is inferred, He was something more than the "*son of David.*" He proposes the same question to His Apostles, distinctly referring to Himself, "*quem vos dicitis me esse;*" but, here, He refrains from

putting the question in this form, as the Pharisees would, undoubtedly, blaspheme, and say He was a seducer, an enemy of God.

43. "*He saith to them,*" in presence of the entire people, whom He wished to instruct on this important fundamental point of faith.

"*How then doth David in spirit?*" &c. He shows, that their answer was quite an inadequate reply; and that, if they adhered to it exclusively and conceived nothing of Christ more elevated than that He was mere man, they could not understand or account for the words which were uttered by David, in the Psalms; uttered by him, under the influence of inspiration and the dictation of God's "*Spirit,*" which, therefore, were perfectly true. The words, "*David in spirit,*" are very emphatic, as they imply, that it was the "*Spirit*" who possessed David, rather than David himself, that spoke.

44. "*The Lord said to my Lord,*" &c. The words mean, "*the Lord* (God the Father) *said to my Lord,*" viz., Christ, His eternal Son. "*Sit on my right hand,*" after having vanquished all Thine enemies, death, and the devil, by Thy death, by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension. Then, His Father placed Him "*above all principality, and power . . . and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*" (Eph. i. 21).

"*Until I make Thy enemies.*" "*Until,*" does not imply that *after* that time, He would cease to sit at His right hand. It only signifies, that the event of putting His enemies under His feet, was most certainly to happen, which is clearly expressed by St. Paul (Heb. x. 13), "*From henceforth expecting, till His enemies be made His footstool.*" The word, "*until,*" has the meaning of, "*even until,*" and implies, a continual, uninterrupted reign, even at the time when there might be a doubt as to His sitting at the right hand of God, viz., before all His enemies were utterly prostrated. For after this period, there could be no doubt of His reigning. So, the words mean, "*Sit at My right hand,*" even during the period which may elapse, before I utterly subject all Thine enemies. For, afterwards, there can be no doubt of your reigning.

"*Thy footstool,*" implies, the utmost humiliation and prostration. The idea is borrowed from a cruel custom sometimes resorted to by conquerors, of putting their foot on the neck of the vanquished, as a mark of utter subjugation. It is recorded of some fierce conquerors, that they made their royal captives footstools when about to mount on horseback. Sapor treated the Emperor Aurelian thus; and Tamerlane, the haughty Tartar Emperor, treated Bajazet, the Emperor of the Turks, in the same way.

This will be fulfilled in regard to Christ, in the Day of Judgment. (1 Cor. xv. 24, &c.) Our Redeemer quotes these latter words, "*until I make Thine enemies,*" &c., which did not immediately concern the answer to His question, for the purpose of conveying to His enemies the utter discomfiture, humiliation, and eternal misery they would one day have to endure, as the result of their opposition to Himself.

46. "*And no man was able to answer Him,*" &c. His objection so utterly disconcerted them, that they were reduced to silence. The silence of the Pharisees shows, how utterly absurd it is to understand Psalm cix., of any other than our Divine Lord. The Pharisees, at the time, understood it of Him. So did the whole Jewish Church; otherwise, they would have replied, that David did not refer to Him at all; and hence, that it was not necessary to understand the words, "*my Lord,*" of Him. Moreover, it is of Him alone, certain passages of the same Psalm could be understood *v.g.,*

"*Thou art a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech.*" Hence, the absurdity of understanding the Psalm of either David, or Melchisedech, or Eleazar, &c., as some modern Jews do. The force of our Redeemer's argument is not precisely, that He is called, "*my Lord*," since, these words might be applied to one who is not God. Thus, David calls Saul "*his lord*" (1 Kings xxvi.); but, in this, that David calls his *own* son "*his Lord*," which implies, that He must be David's superior and master, which would be verified only in the supposition, that He was more than man. Thus, for instance, Philip of Macedon, would not call Alexander the Great, who was far more powerful than his father, "*his lord*," because, Philip was not subject to Alexander. Now, David, on whose throne Christ was to sit, and this, at a distant day, calls Him "*his Lord*," which, of course, refers to His being his Saviour, as God-man.

"*Neither durst any man*," &c., of the class who were silenced by Him. "*Ask Him any more questions*," of a captious nature, as they were in the habit of doing. "*From that day forth*," during His public ministry. From this, it is clear, He taught publicly *afterwards*. For if He did not publicly teach later on, what wonder, if no one put to Him questions under the circumstances referred to? His disciples, after this, asked Him some questions, and He was questioned privately, in the house of Caiphas, on some points, by His enemies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANALYSIS.

After silencing the Scribes and Pharisees, and seeing them still incorrigible and obdurate, our Lord, in order to guard His disciples and the people against being seduced by them, publicly denounces them for their vices. Before doing so, however, He distinguishes their public official teaching from their private vices, and tells the people to attend to their teaching in their official capacity, but by no means to imitate them in their wicked conduct, which He describes (1-7). He takes occasion, from the pride of the Pharisees, for which He severely reprehends them, to inculcate humility, both interior and exterior (8-12). He next pronounces woes and maledictions against the Scribes and Pharisees, which He repeats eight times, on account of their detestable lives, and the vices, which they shamelessly indulged in (13-33). After predicting their maltreatment of the Apostles, and the preachers of the Gospel, He foretells the utter ruin of themselves and their city, notwithstanding His special love, repeatedly manifested to, but as often spurned and undervalued by, the unhappy Jerusalem (34-39).

TEXT.

THEN Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples.

2. *Saying : The Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses.*
3. *All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do : but according to their works do ye not : for they say, and do not.*
4. *For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders ; but with a finger of their own they will not move them.*
5. *And all their works they do for to be seen of men. For they make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge their fringes.*
6. *And they love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues.*
7. *And salutations in the market-place, and to be called by men, Rabbi.*
8. *But be not you called Rabbi. For one is your master, and all you are brethren.*
9. *And call none your father upon earth : for one is your father, who is in heaven.*
10. *Neither be ye called masters : for one is your master, Christ.*
11. *He that is the greatest among you shall be your servant.*
12. *And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled : and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*Then,*" after He had reduced to silence His adversaries, and had employed all possible remedies in vain, to effect the conversion of the Scribes and Pharisees; after He had adduced the most cogent reasons to prove the truth of His doctrine, and had sealed the Divinity of His Heavenly mission by incontestable miracles; after He had privately reprehended them for their wickedness; seeing them still incorrigible, and become more hardened and obdurate, "*then,*" in order to guard the multitude and His disciples against being seduced by their wicked example, He publicly upbraids them for their vices.

2. Before doing so, however, He distinguishes between their public teaching, when interpreting the law of Moses, or their public authority, and their private errors, and personal vices; and guards against the charge of being the enemy of the law of Moses, and a subverter of constituted authority. In the former character, He wishes the people to respect and follow them, since they were the legitimate representatives of the authority Divinely constituted by Moses; and, as the New Law, which was to succeed the Old, and the Gospel ministry, which was to be substituted for that of Aaron and his sons, were not yet established, the people were still bound to obey the existing spiritual authority.

"*Have sitten upon the chair of Moses.*" By this "*chair of Moses,*" is meant, the authority Divinely instituted, and exercised by Moses, of teaching the people and expounding to them the law of God, and of ruling them in all things appertaining to the Divine worship; just as by the chair of Peter, *cathedra Petri*, is meant, the authority Divinely granted him to teach and rule the entire Church. To sit in the chair of Peter is to succeed to the fulness of his authority, that is, to "the full power of feeding, ruling, and governing the universal Church." Hence, to "*sit in the chair of Moses,*" means, to exercise, by legitimate succession, the teaching and authority of Moses, in expounding the doctrine of God. The words are allusive to the posture which teachers were generally in the habit of assuming in authoritatively delivering instruction to their hearers; the custom, however, among the Jews in delivering instructions, or expounding the SS. Scripture, in their synagogues, was to do so in a *standing* posture (Luke iv. 16; Acts xiii. 16). So also Esdras read the law in a standing posture (2 Esdras viii. 4). The Greek for "*sit*" (*καθισταν*), means, *have sitten, and do still sit* (Beelen).

"*The Scribes and the Pharisees.*" The Scribes were the doctors and interpreters of the law. It was their duty to propound and explain the law of Moses to the people (see ii. 4). The Pharisees ruled the people, and filled the office of magistrates and rulers. The same person often filled the office of Scribe, and belonged to the sect of Pharisees. And, most likely, all the Scribes, most of whom were Pharisees, were Priests or Levites, whose duty it was to explain the law to the people (Mal. ii.), "*labia sacerdotis,*" &c. But, although the Scribes and Pharisees were priests; still, our Redeemer, out of reverence for the Priestly character, refrains from referring to them, as such, to show us the respect due to the Priestly office, even where some of its occupants act in a way not befitting their exalted character. What an example to the modern Pharisees, whose entire occupation it would seem to be, to indulge in unnecessary censures on the action and motives of the Priests of God, even in presence of children, whose minds they thus corrupt. Would that some Priests, themselves the followers of Judas, who, thank God, are very few, were not the first to criticise the best actions, and endeavour to blacken the character, and impair the influence of, God's zealous ministers, whose edifying lives are a reproach to these *false brethren*.

3. "*All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, do,*" &c. The word, "*therefore,*" shows the source of the obligation here imposed by our Divine Redeemer. It is in virtue of their public ministerial character, as successors to the authority of Moses.

"*All things whatsoever.*" Some interpreters give these words a wide extension, so as to embrace not only the commandments and precepts contained in the law of Moses, and expounded by them from it; but also, all the ordinances and precepts, even of an indifferent nature, imposed by the Scribes and Pharisees, not opposed to the law of Moses, as those would be regarding the honour due to parents (xv. 4), and those regarding perjury (v. 16); also, their teaching, regarding our Redeemer, which was manifestly opposed to Moses. These, and all such, are clearly excepted from the words, "*all things whatsoever,*" Thus, when the Apostle commands children to obey their parents, "*in all things,*" he manifestly, from the very nature of things, excepts obedience when they command evil. The universal form of the words, "*all things whatsoever,*" with the limitation already assigned, is in favour of this interpretation. (Jansenius, &c.) Others, with Maldonatus, restrict the words to the precepts contained in the law of Moses, and taught from it, or to the doctrine of Moses; and this would seem to be implied in the words, "*sit in the chair of Moses,*" as if he said, all things, then, that they command, while expounding the law of Moses, or, rather, all things which the law of Moses prescribes, the Pharisees being its expounders, do and observe. In this interpretation, there is not even the appearance of contradiction between the commands of our Redeemer here, and the caution He gives (c. xvi.), "*cavete a fermento Phariseorum,*" as in this latter place, He means to guard them against the errors which the Pharisees taught, opposed to the law of Moses. In such circumstances, they did "*not sit on the chair of Moses.*"

Whether the Jewish Church was gifted with infallibility, or not, is a point not quite agreed upon. At all events, it seems to have never, as such, whatever might have been the perverse teachings of individuals, erred in faith, until the time it rejected and condemned Christ. Then, however, it had ceased; it was of merely temporary duration, and any promises made to it could only regard the time of its existence. But, in reference to the Christian Church, the gift of infallibility has been secured to it until the end of time, until the consummation of ages. (See Luke xxii. 32.)

"*But, according to their works do ye not.*" Our Redeemer here carefully distinguishes their private doctrines, personal conduct, and, likely, also their private teaching, from their utterances in their public ministerial capacity. It was the more necessary to caution the people against being imitators of their wicked conduct, as men are apt to attend to, and imitate the practice, rather than the doctrine, of their teachers.

"*For they say, and do not.*" This is the first subject of reproach, on the part of our Lord, against the Scribes and Pharisees. Their conduct is not in accordance with their teaching. The man who delivers precepts, binding on all, and himself violates them, commits a threefold sin—1st. By transgressing the law, which he is bound to observe. 2ndly. By not correcting others, as he should. 3rdly. By rendering his teaching odious, thus injuring his hearers.

4. "*For, they bind,*" i.e., collect into bundles, "*heavy . . . burdens*"—the second subject of reproach. These words are allusive to the practice, resorted to sometimes, of tying and binding up heavy loads, to be carried by beasts of burden. "*Insupportable.*" The Greek, *δυσβάστακτα*, means, *hard to be carried*. This has reference to the multiplied ceremonial precepts, which constituted a heavy burden, "*which neither they, nor their fathers, have been able to bear*" (Acts xv. 10). To this, add the traditions of the ancients, and their own. St. Chrysostom, however, remarks, that,

in this, our Redeemer does not refer to the Jewish Ceremonial Law, which Christ had not, as yet, abrogated; but, to the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the laws they imposed, contrary to Scripture. It may be, He refers, both to the heavy load of the Ceremonial Law, to which they superadded a great multiplicity of human traditions. To this, add their rigid interpretation of the letter of the Divine Law, the stern severity with which they enforced it. All this rendered their precepts "*insupportable*." The rigour with which they enforced the observance of the Sabbath may serve as an example of the latter. The words, "*lay them on men's shoulders*," conveys an idea of the haughty, authoritative tone, assumed by these men.

"*But with a finger of their own*," &c. A proverbial form of expression, common to both Greek and Latin writers, conveying, that one has no inclination or disposition whatever to take part in any labour one imposes on others. The word, "*finger*," is opposed to "*shoulder*," and the whole phrase conveys, that these men did not use the least exertion to render, by their own example, the observance of these ordinances light for those upon whom they imposed them.

Whether He refers here to the peculiar traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, or to the multitude of the precepts of the Old Law, which they rendered still more intolerable by the excessive rigour with which they enforced their strict observance—and this latter seems more likely, as the Pharisees were most observant of their own traditions, while they neglected the law—St. Chrysostom observes, that our Redeemer prefers a twofold charge against the Pharisees: 1st. That of being too exacting, as regards others. 2ndly. Of being too indulgent in regard to themselves.

5. In the foregoing, our Redeemer cautions His followers against imitating the Pharisees, &c., in their violations of God's law; here, He cautions them against imitating them, in the good they seem to do; since, even in this, their motives are corrupt. They perform all their external good works, such as prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, &c., from a vicious motive, for the purpose of gaining human applause, rather than of promoting the glory of God. In this, they are not to be imitated.

"*For, they make their phylacteries broad*." These "*phylacteries*," literally, *preservatives*, to remind them to keep the law; safeguards or charms against evil, were strips or scrolls of parchment, on which were written the Ten Commandments, or some sentences from the law. These the Jews bound round their foreheads, their left wrist, or arm, while at prayer (Josephus Antiq. iv. 8-13), to remind them of their duty. St. Jerome assures us, that, up to his own time, the Jews wore them in India, and among the Persians and Babylonians. This custom took its rise from a too literal, instead of a spiritual, interpretation of the text (Deut. vi. 8), "*Thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move as a sign between thy eyes*." What was commanded here, was, that the Jews should be always mindful of God's Commandments, that they should make them the rule of their conduct, and meditate on them day and night. But the Jews took the words *literally*, and acted accordingly. It is not the use of them our Redeemer here condemns; but, the ostentatious display of them by the Pharisees, in order to appear more religious than others.

"*And enlarge their fringes*." We read (Numbers xv. 38; Deut. xxii. 12), that Moses commanded the Jews "*to make to themselves fringes*," or, *to make strings in the hem, at the four corners of their cloaks*. These fringes, or tassels, which hung from the four corners of their cloaks, which were square in front and behind, had each a distinguishing thread of deep blue—the colour of the heavens—to remind them, of their

obligation to observe God's Commandments, and also to keep before their minds, that they were segregated from all other nations. St. Jerome informs us, that, in his time, some Jews inserted sharp-pointed thorns, whose puncture, when they either walked or sat down, would remind them of their duty. What our Redeemer here censures is, the ostentatious display of the Pharisees, who enlarged these tassels, in order to appear more religious than others. They affected all this external show of piety in their garments, while they denied its spirit, and despised its ordinances, in the regulation of their own lives.

6. "*They love,*" that is, inordinately and eagerly ambition. "*The first places at feasts.*" Among the Jews, the first place was at the top of the table; among the Greeks and Romans, the middle of the triclinium. Our Redeemer does not so much censure them for actually obtaining these places—since those placed in exalted station should get a preference; and God, whose representatives they are, is honoured in them—as for their ambitious and vainglorious anxiety in regard to such distinctions; and it was with a view of receiving those marks of honour and distinction, they affected the exterior sanctity of manners referred to in the preceding words.

"*And the first chairs in the synagogues.*" The most honourable seats in these places of public meeting, assigned to the seniors and the learned, with their backs to the desk of the reader, and their faces to the people. They would thus be in a position to exhibit the most profound humility and simplicity.

7. "*And salutations,*" profound marks of reverence and respect due to them, as pre-eminently holy, and observant of the law, in places of public resort. This reverence, so much coveted by the Scribes, &c., was, probably, rendered by the people with uncovered head, and bended knee.

"*And to be called by men, Rabbi.*" The word, "*Rabbi,*" signifies, "*my master.*" It is repeated in the ordinary Greek, "*Rabbi, Rabbi*" (but not repeated so in the Vatican MS.) This was an epithet applied by Judas to our Lord (Matt. xxvi. 49), and also to John the Baptist, by his disciples (John iii. 26). It is not the *title* itself that our Redeemer censures, but the vainglorious assumption and pride of the Pharisees, who were delighted with the frequent repetition of the term.

8. "*Be you,*" My followers and disciples, whom I wish to be altogether free from the vices and passions of these Scribes and Pharisees—"you"—whose morals I wish to be, in every respect, the opposite of theirs.

"*Be not called Rabbi,*" &c., that is, neither vaingloriously affect nor desire such titles of pre-eminence and distinction, nor take foolish complacency in them, should they be bestowed on you, nor on this account prefer yourselves to others. It is quite clear, that our Redeemer does not here condemn the use and bestowal of these titles; since, St. Paul calls himself the doctor of the Gentiles, and the father of the Galatians, in the faith; and we are all obliged to show honour and respect to our fathers and superiors, on earth. In order to see what our Redeemer here censures, we must look to the scope or end of His observations, and this clearly is, to inculcate humility and simplicity of life, on the part of His followers, so opposed to the pride and vain, ostentatious assumption of these titles by the Scribes, &c., thus despising all others.

"*For one is your Master.*" His disciples should acknowledge that there is but "*One,*" who is strictly entitled to the appellation of "*Master;*" that, although others may be "*masters,*" in an inferior degree, they are still but the ministers and

instruments employed by that "*one Master*," who alone can, by excellence be termed such. He alone, of Himself, possesses all knowledge; He alone can impart fruit to the teaching of others; He alone can speak to the heart, and interiorly communicate light and knowledge; compared with Him, none others can strictly be termed "*masters*." From Him, they borrow all their knowledge. All they have, "*is received*" from Him, and all the glory of their labour should be referred to Him alone. Hence, those who affect to glory in this, or similar titles, assume what is not theirs, and derogate from what is due to Him. In this sense, our Redeemer tells us not to wish to be called "*Rabbi*," as compared with God; as implying superiority in a prohibited sense, over others; "*and, all you are brethren*," all, whether in an humble or exalted station, learned or unlearned, all, are one in Christ, all children of the same Heavenly Father, members of the same Christian family. No one should, therefore, assume superiority over others, in the sense that anyone has anything from himself, since all our gifts are received. This, however, does not interfere with due subordination, or with the relations which should exist between the governed and governing parties (1 Cor. iv. 15), or with the gradation established by God, in His mystic body, so absolutely necessary for its well-being and existence (1 Cor. xii. 14-27).

The words, then, mean: Do not vaingloriously aspire to the title of doctor or teacher, as if you had, of yourselves, any claim to this title; as if you were entitled to derive honour therefrom, as is done by the Pharisees. For, there is only *One* who can strictly be termed such, viz., Christ; or, as if you could, therefore, despise others, who may not be thus privileged; for, they are become your equals in Christianity. "*You are all brethren*."

9. "*And call none your father upon earth*," in the sense, of referring all we possess to them, as the principal cause, viz., our existence, our possessions; or, all we hope for, by way of inheritance. In this sense, we have but "*one Father, who is in heaven*." To Him alone are we are indebted for everything—our life, our persons, all our faculties and senses, our corporal and spiritual privileges, our claims to eternal happiness. It is the vainglorious affectation of this and the other titles, on the part of the Scribes, for the purpose of pride and ostentation, that our Redeemer here condemns, as opposed to the glory and honour of God, the great source of all good, "*of whom is named all paternity, in heaven and earth*" (Eph. iii. 15). He, by no means, however, censures or prohibits Christians from bearing and bestowing, in a dependent and subordinate sense, these titles, which superiority of office, station, or talent, may confer, and which may contribute to the subordination due by others. "As there is, by nature, but one God, and one Son, yet others are called sons of God, by adoption; so, there is but one Father and Master; yet, others, in a less strict sense, are styled fathers and masters" (St. Jerome).

10. Most likely, our Redeemer here repeats what He inculcated (v. 8), to show His detestation of pride, and to eradicate it the more effectually from the minds of His Apostles, whom He had appointed to be teachers and doctors of the entire earth; or, it may be, that a different idea is conveyed here, tending, however, to the same end. "*Rabbi*"—derived from *Rab*, signifying, the multitude—may refer to the multiplied variety of learning one possesses for teaching others. "*Master*" (*καθηγητης*), may refer to the same, under a different relation, as "*leader, guide, director*;" and Christ is to be called so pre-eminently, as being alone, "*the way, the truth, and the life*."

11. This shows the scope of the preceding. Our Redeemer supposes that there is to be pre-eminence and superiority enjoyed in His Church, and authority exercised by some over others. This order and subordination is required in every well-regulated body, for its very continuance in existence. But, supposing this, our Redeemer points out the true and proper way of exercising this superiority. (See xx. 27, &c.)

12. "*Whosoever*," no matter who, "*shall exalt himself*," through pride, and shall attribute to himself what he has not, or, shall glory in what he may have, as if it were not received, and shall thus usurp the glory of God's gifts, and despise others, such a man shall be humbled, debased, and degraded, for all eternity. Man has a natural aversion to whatever debases him, and since he sinned, he only merits humiliation and debasement. But, God, who is goodness itself, and knows man's weakness, obliges him to humble himself, only with a promise of solid and enduring elevation; and, in prohibiting him to exalt himself, it is with a threat of eternal humiliation. In thus addressing His disciples, our Lord traces an image of the folly of the Pharisees, who exalted themselves above others; since, the measure of their humiliation, at a future day, shall be that of their self-elevation at present. For this reason, He hurls against them the following woes and maledictions, to inspire others with a horror of their criminal conduct, and thus deter them from imitating their vicious example.

TEXT.

13. *But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter.*

14. *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive the greater judgment.*

15. *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte: and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves.*

16. *Woe to you blind guides, that say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing: but he that shall swear by the gold of the temple, is a debtor.*

17. *Ye foolish and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple, that sanctifieth the gold?*

18. *And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing: but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, is a debtor.*

19. *Ye blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar, that sanctifieth the gift?*

20. *He therefore that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things that are upon it:*

21. *And whosoever shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth in it:*

22. *And he that sweareth by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

23. *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith. These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone.*

24. *Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.*

25. *Wo to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites : because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish : but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness.*

26. *Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.*

27. *Wo to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites : because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness.*

28. *So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just ; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

29. *Wo to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites : that build the sepulchres of the prophets, and adorn the monuments of the just.*

30. *And say : If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*

31. *Wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of them that killed the prophets.*

32. *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*

COMMENTARY.

13. It is observed by commentators, that as our Redeemer pronounces eight beatitudes on His followers, so here He pronounces eight *woes* against His enemies. In this, the Legislator of the New Law, imitates Moses, the Legislator of the Old, who proposes to those who keep his law, many benedictions; and threatens its violaters with as many maledictions (Deut. xxvii. 12-26).

"*You shut the kingdom of heaven.*" Christ came to preach the near approach of "*the kingdom of heaven,*" shut for 4000 years; and to open it to mankind by His death and Passion. The immediate portal or doorway leading to this kingdom (whether we understand by it, the Church of Christ, or the kingdom of bliss, to which latter it more probably refers), is faith in Christ. For, He is the door; only through faith in Him, can one enter. The Scribes and Pharisees, who, not only themselves, refused to believe in Christ, but did their utmost to prevent others from believing in Him, or becoming His followers, closed it, or kept it closed "*against men,*" or, in the face of many who were about to enter (*εμπροσθεν ανθρωπων*). By denouncing the doctrine of Christ, by representing Him as an impostor, and His miracles as performed from the influence of Satan, they prevented men who were about to enter the Church, and embrace the faith of Christ, from doing so.

While as priests and pastors, it was their duty to save from ruin those who were on the brink of the abyss, these acted as poisoners and corrupters of souls. They not only refused themselves to embrace the faith; but, by all means, in their power, nay, even by threats among the rest, to cast out of the synagogue any one who would believe in Christ, they deterred many from entering the Church, which is alone the entrance to the kingdom of bliss. When the shepherd turns wolf, the state of things becomes desperate. It may be, that, in this verse, our Redeemer charges them with keeping concealed from the people, the true import of the prophecies that regarded Christ, from the clear fulfilment of which, both as regards doctrine and miracles, they would see He was the promised Messiah; and by the false interpretation of those prophecies of which they were the legally appointed expositors, and by their calumnious and blasphemous accounts of His Divine miracles, they kept others from embracing the faith. It is in this sense, most

likely, He says of the lawyers (Luke xi. 52), where the allusion is the same as here, "*they have taken away the key of knowledge,*" &c.

The metaphor is clearly allusive to those who, having the key of a house, take it away, so that others cannot enter. They concealed from the people the true knowledge of the prophecies regarding Christ, and perverted them, out of jealousy towards Him, and a vain desire to uphold their own authority, to their own ruin and that of others. Similar is the reproach of Osee (c. iv), against the Prophets and Priests of his day, who did not announce, but rather, concealed from the people, the knowledge and ways of the Lord.

14. "*Because you devour the houses.*" "*Houses,*" signifies, the substance and means "*of widows*"—a class of whom you should rather be the protectors and defenders, as is prescribed in the law. The circumstances of their circumventing poor, defenceless widows, who are more liable to be deceived by the external appearance of sanctimony, and have no husbands or protectors to guard them, aggravated their crime, and showed more clearly, the inhuman heartlessness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

"*Making long prayers.*" The Greek has, *και προφασει μακρά προσευχομενοι*. "*And praying long under pretence,*" as if He said, under pretence of offering up long prayers, which was only an hypocritical pretext for gratifying their avarice, by taking advantage of the piety and weakness of these women, who, having the disposal of their property, reduced themselves to want, in order to enrich these heartless traffickers in religion. For, it was not prayer these hypocrites had in view; but, the gratification of avarice. Hence, they prevailed on these artless, unprotected women, who easily became the prey of such canting hypocrites, to give them, or what came to the same, to make over in vows or offerings to the temple in whose wealth they participated, large sums of money, in order to be recommended to the Divine protection, in these long prayers, the real object of which was avarice and ostentation. It may be, too, that there is allusion here, to the avaricious practices of the Pharisees, in regard to praying for the dead. It was customary, from the remotest antiquity, to pray in the synagogue for the souls of the departed. (2 Mach. xii.) This is rendered probable, from the fact, of our Redeemer mentioning "*widows,*" as the parties whom they robbed, under pretence of long prayers, most likely offered up for their deceased husbands. It might be said, however, that they are specially mentioned, in order to aggravate the heartlessness of the Pharisees. Others, understand the words to mean, that their prayers and religious exercises, protracted by them to a great length, served as a pretext for visiting the houses of widows, who easily shared their wealth with their guests. Our Redeemer does not condemn long prayers, since He, Himself, devoted whole nights to prayer; and so did many of the Saints. He only condemns the hypocritical affectation and abuse of them.

"*For this, you shall receive the greater judgment,*" or, a heavier condemnation. They were guilty of a threefold sin, viz., avarice; perversion of sacred things to bad purposes; oppression of those, whom they should specially protect.

This verse has not been interpreted by St. Jerome, nor by Origen and others. Hence, it is omitted in some Latin versions. But, it is found in all Greek versions, with the order somewhat inverted in some, this being placed before verse 13. Its genuineness is generally admitted. It is found in Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47.

15. "*You go around about sea and land,*" traverse the entire earth; a proverbial

form of expression common among the Greeks and Romans, implying the greatest activity and exertions. Even the Heathen writers allude to the zeal of the Jews for making proselytes (Hor. Sat. i. 4), so much so, that it was interdicted by the "*ecclesiastical institutions of the Emperors.*" "*Proselyte,*" immediately derived from the Greek, the same as the Latin term, *advena*, or, *adventitius*, denotes a person who, having belonged before to one form of religion, leaves it, and *comes* to join another. It signifies here, the opposite of one who was born of Jewish parents. The Scribes and Pharisees left nothing undone to make as many converts to Judaism as possible; and, thus, endeavoured to gain a character for extraordinary religious zeal. But, in reality, these "*hypocrites*" had in view, to advance their own ambitious and avaricious ends, by sharing in the profits accruing from the sacrifices, or victims which these converts would present in the temple. Some understand the word to mean, not so much a convert to Judaism, as a convert to the peculiar sect of the Pharisees. "*A child of hell,*" deserving hell, "*twofold more than yourselves,*" worse than the Pharisees themselves, even in the proportion of two to one. How this happens our Redeemer does not say; but, it is supposed to occur in one of two ways: either, that the converts, scandalized at the hypocrisy and wicked lives of the Pharisees, or, disgusted with the yoke of the law, to which were superadded Pharisaical traditions, again returned in disgust to the worship of idols, and thus sinned more grievously than before; since, they sinned with greater light and knowledge, and added the crime of apostasy to their other sins, thus selling their souls doubly to the devil. Or, it may be, that seeing the wicked lives of their instructors, they wished to outstrip them in wickedness. For, as St. Chrysostom remarks (in Matth. Hom. 74), with difficulty do we follow good teachers; and, as regards wicked instructors, not only do we follow their perverse example; but, we also endeavour to surpass them in wickedness, owing to our strong natural tendency to evil. It is not the zeal of the Pharisees our Redeemer here censures; but, the end to which they conducted their proselytes, the bad example and instruction they gave them. How applicable are not these words of our Redeemer to these modern Pharisees, these unprincipled traffickers in human souls, who infest this country, seeking some unhappy victims of misery and wretchedness, not to console them, like the good Samaritan, with the wine and oil of gladness, irrespective of religion, but, to corrupt them first with bribes, and then seduce them to abjure, against conscience, all they hold most sacred, in order to join their sect, not caring what they become, if, after the voice of conscience is stifled, they can be brought to blaspheme God's Holy Church, the Angels and Saints of heaven; and above all, the Glorious and Immaculate Queen of the Saints, so dear to every Christian heart. Thus, they render their wretched dupes children of hell, worse, if possible, than themselves.

16. "*Blind guides.*" The following is one of the false traditions introduced by the Pharisees, contrary to God's law, and in promulgating which, they did *not sit* on the chair of Moses. "*Blind.*" The crimes which provoked the preceding woes proceeded from hypocrisy. But, the crimes now denounced, proceeded from blindness of heart, resulting from avarice, from a desire to stimulate the people to offer gifts, of which they themselves were sharers.

"*Guides,*" teachers and instructors, pointing out to the people the way in which they should walk. "It was not the fear of God, but the love of gold," says St. Jerome, that influenced them. They impressed the people with greater respect for the sanctity of the oblations in which they had an interest, than for the sanctity of the place in which they were presented, or of the altar consecrated for victims.

"*Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing.*" The Pharisees, seeing that it was commanded in the Old Law, to swear by the name of God, regarded all oaths by the name of creatures, as not binding. But, in consequence of the immediate connexion existing between God and the gifts offered to Him, they excepted oaths made by these gifts. They held, that one was bound to fulfil such oaths. This blindness, on their part, was caused by avarice, as they were enriched by the gifts presented to the treasury of the temple. It was the same motive that made them regard the fulfilment of a vow, to give a gift to the sanctuary (*Corban*), more binding than the precept of "*honouring one's parents.*" Our Redeemer first refutes their error regarding the superior sanctity of the gifts offered in the temple, or on the altar, beyond that of the altar or temple itself. He shows, the temple to be holier than the gift offered on it; and He next draws a conclusion, diametrically opposite to that deduced by them from these false premises, viz., that, as the gifts, &c., were more holy than the places where they were presented, the oaths, by these gifts, were more binding than those by the places where they were offered. Our Redeemer first shows, that the altar and temple are holier than the gifts. In truth, as these gifts, viewed in themselves materially, are profane, without any sacredness, it is solely from the circumstances of their being presented in the temple, or, on the altar, that any sacredness or extrinsic sanctity, consisting in their being separated from profane uses, and set apart to be dedicated to Divine purposes, is imparted to them; and therefore, the altar and the temple, "*which sanctify them,*" by imparting a kind of extrinsic sanctity to them, are greater than these gifts, which are sanctified.

20. Having refuted their error, He now draws an opposite conclusion. "*Therefore*"—as the altar and the temple are holier and greater than the gifts offered in them—"he that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things that are upon it." He swears by all the gifts presented on the altar, and, therefore, the oath by the altar, is as binding as that by the gifts on it.

21. Such a man swears openly by God Himself, who, in a special manner, dwells in the temple. Such an oath is directly referred to God Himself, from whom these things cannot be considered to be separated.

22. The same is equally true of an oath by heaven, since God dwells there in a still more special manner. Hence, the oaths by creatures are binding; since in them, whether common or sacred, God is present; and they are His creatures, either by the title of creation or consecration. For, when we swear by mute creatures, as they cannot be invoked as witnesses of the truth, unless we suppose some divinity inherent in them, which no believer ever imagines, we must swear by God, and invoke Him as witness, as He exists, and is acknowledged in them. For, to swear, is to call God to witness. Whosoever, therefore, swears, is convicted of calling on God as witness of the truth. How many among Christians follow the false teaching of the Pharisees? How many among them make light of swearing by God Himself, of calling Him directly to witness, while they regard, with the greatest reverence, an oath on the Gospels, which are sanctified by God's name; nay, even hold in higher reverence an oath or assertion by false human honour? This preposterous conduct is, unfortunately, to be met with every day among Christians.

23. "*You tithe*" (*αποδεκατουμε, decimatis*), may mean, either to *pay* or *receive* tithes. He here taxes them with another instance of hypocrisy. The Pharisees wished to

appear so exact in the observance of the law, that they paid the tithes of the smallest herbs, which were either not enforced by the law; or, at best, were not binding under grievous sin. "*Mint, anise, and cummin,*" herbs growing in the land of Judea. The law prescribed, that "*all tithes of the land, whether of corn, or of the fruits of trees, are the Lord's*" (Lev. xxvii. 30). In Hebrew, for "*corn,*" it is, "*the seed of the earth.*" Hence, rigorously speaking, it might be, that tithes should be exacted from the *herbs*, which might be classed among the *seeds* of the earth. But, by a mild interpretation, they were regarded as not obligatory, nor was the payment of tithes from them observed or enforced among the Jews. Hence, the Pharisee in the Gospel says, that he, as contrasted with the publican and the other classes among the Jews, "*gave tithes of ALL he possessed.*" Our Redeemer does not censure the Pharisees for paying tithes from these herbs; since, if not prescribed, it was, at least, conformable to the law. What He does censure them for is, that while they attended to small things with the utmost punctuality, in order thus to acquire a character for greater exactitude and more perfect observance of the law, they, with consummate hypocrisy, neglected the most important precepts, viz., "*judgment,*" which may mean, in a general way, their neglect to render to their neighbour what was his due, or, their neglect, in their capacity of judges of the people, to pass a just sentence, according to the merits of each case. For, this office of judges was exercised by the Pharisees. They favoured their friends and those who gave them bribes. There is hardly any crime which the SS. Scripture so strongly condemns as the passing of unjust judgments. "*Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow*" (Isa. i. 17).

"*And mercy.*" They rigorously exact their dues from the poor, victims from widows, &c., and neglect, at the same time, to succour the indigent, and to show charity to their neighbours. Whereas, God "*prefers mercy to sacrifice*" (Osee vi. 6).

"*And faith,*" that is, fidelity, truth in their dealings, promises, and compacts. It may also refer to their rejection of the faith of Christ—the root and foundation of all true justice, of which they wished to be accounted most zealous.

"*These things you ought to have done,*" that is, to have observed, viz., "*the weightier things,*" the more important precepts of the law, *judgment*, &c., "*and not to leave those,*" viz., the paying of tithes, "*undone.*" From these latter words, it is inferred by some, that the payment of tithes, out of the herbs above-mentioned, was prescribed by law. However, it may be said, that "*those*" refers, not to tithes out of "*mint, anise,*" &c., but to the precepts of paying tithes in general, and this our Redeemer prescribes, lest He might pass for an enemy of the law; or, the word, "*ought,*" in reference to the latter phrase, may simply mean, it was *convenient* and *right*, as being conformable to the law, though not necessary.

Some expositors, with St. Jerome, interpret the words, "*you tithe*" (*decimatis*), to mean, *you exact tithes*. The Greek, as well as the Latin word, will mean, either to *pay*, or, to *receive tithes*. In this latter interpretation, He taxes the avarice of the Pharisees, and it would refer to such of the Pharisees as were of the Levitical Tribe. The eleven other Tribes paid tithes to the Tribe of Levi; and those of the inferior families of Levi paid tithes of their tithes to the Pontiff and the Priests. (St. Jerome, in Ezech. xlv.; see Numbers xviii.)

However, as it is to the Pharisees our Redeemer addresses Himself, and not to the Priests, it is most likely, that the word means, *to pay tithes*. These hypocrites affected the greatest exactitude, and such zeal for the law, as to pay tithes even out of the most trifling things—hence, the Pharisee in the Gospel says: "*I pay tithes out of all I possess*"—while they neglected the most important ordinances.

"*Blind guides.*" It is a great misery, when men, who are themselves "*blind.*"

far from seeking a guide, presume to guide others. "*Strain out a gnat,*" &c., is a proverbial form of expression, more strongly conveying the preceding idea, that they were very exact about small things, and negligent in regard to great and important matters. The words, "*straining out a gnat,*" contain an allusion to the custom among the Jews, as well as the Greeks and Romans, of passing through a strainer, wines which in southern countries, and Palestine particularly, bred a certain species of gnats or insects peculiar to wine (Amos vi. 6). The opposition is rendered more clear and forcible by comparing the smallest insect with the largest animal. The Pharisees, in their excessive punctuality regarding trifles and their neglect of most important matters, resembled those men who strained their wines for fear of swallowing small insects, but opened wide their throats to swallow down a camel.

25. He here instances another case of hypocrisy. In their anxiety to present a good exterior before men, while neglecting to cleanse and purify their souls, the Pharisees, &c., resembled men, who wash the outside of their cups and dishes, but mind not their contents, or what is placed in them; and, as exterior cleanliness of cups, &c., cannot serve the body, if the contents be impure; so, neither can their bodily ablutions serve their souls. "*You make clean the outside of the cup,*" out of which you drink—"and of the dish," from which you take your food. In this is contained the comparison above alluded to. "*But within you are full of rapine,*" &c. Here, passing from the language of metaphor, he applies the comparison. "*Within,*" in your souls and consciences, while your exterior is specious and showy before men. "*You are full of rapine,*" the guilt of extortion practised on the poor, whom you plunder, pollutes your souls. "*And uncleanness,*" all sorts of crime arising from your repeated violations of God's law (*αδικίας*). Some MSS. have (*ακρασίας*), *intemperance*, as if He referred to their intemperance in the use of meat and drink. There is a difference of reading in MSS. In some MSS., the comparison, or figure, is observed throughout, thus: "*but within they (viz., the cups and dishes), are full of rapine and intemperance,*" that is, the contents of the cups are the fruit of rapine and excess of every sort. It may be, that our Lord alludes to their great anxiety to observe the Pharisaical ordinances, regarding the repeated washing of cups, &c., among the Jews, while they cared not for the interior purity, of which these exterior ablutions were but mere symbols.

26. This would seem to be an application of the foregoing comparison. "*Blind Pharisee.*" Thou, who presumest to guide others, and art blind thyself. "*First make clean the inside of the cup.*" First, purify thy conscience, which is represented by the interior of the cup and of the dish. "*That the outside may become clean,*" that, in the sight of God, and, in truth, what appears clean outside, or your whole exterior, may be really edifying and blameless; since, it is from the interior virtues and purity, our exterior appearance derives any value; and without interior purity, exterior decorum or appearance of virtue is only a practical lie.

27. This is another similitude, tending to the same end, having for object, to show the hypocrisy and exterior affectation of sanctity, on the part of the Pharisees, while they were devoid of all sanctity and virtue before God, who sees the heart. The comparison hardly needs any explanation.

"*Whitened sepulchres.*" The Jews whitened the exterior of their sepulchres annually, in order that they might be known, and clearly seen, and the pollution caused by touching, or walking over them, avoided.

28. "*Inwardly you are full of hypocrisy,*" owing to their lying affectation of sanctity, which they did not possess; "*and iniquity,*" total disregard of God's law.

29. "*Build the sepulchres of the prophets,*" that is, restored them, and raised them from a state of dilapidation. "*And adorn the monuments of the just,*" conveys the same idea as the former, in a different form of words. "*The just,*" are the same as "*the prophets;*" and "*sepulchres,*" the same as "*monuments.*" The Jews, in order to show their veneration for the persecuted just of old, and to testify their abhorrence of the cruelty they underwent for justice' sake, ornamented and rebuilt their sepulchres. This was, in itself, praiseworthy, and deserving of commendation, nor does our Redeemer pronounce woe upon them on this account. But what He censures in them is, their hypocrisy, in affecting a horror of the crimes of their fathers, who persecuted the prophets, when, at the same time, they proved themselves to be "*sons,*" faithful imitators, not of the virtuous Abraham, but of these same fathers, who killed the prophets, while harbouring the wicked design of persecuting unto death the Lord of the prophets, to whom the prophets all bore testimony.

30. Our Redeemer shows, that He sees into the secrets of their hearts, their wicked designs against Himself, to cover which they pretended to honour the memory of the prophets, and to abhor the wicked deeds of those who persecuted them. They pretended that far from sharing in these wicked deeds, had they lived in the days of their fathers, they would rather have been faithful imitators of the prophets, acting a part quite different from that acted by their fathers.

They affected this external respect and veneration for the prophets, solely with a view of concealing their malice, in regard to Jesus Christ, whom, by this pretended reverence for the prophets of old, they wished to make the people regard neither as a just man, nor as a prophet.

31. "*Wherefore,*" by the very fact of their admitting that they would not have joined their "*fathers,*" had they lived in their day, in the persecution of the prophets, they bore testimony "*against themselves,*" or, as the Greek has it, *εαυτοις, unto,* or *regarding themselves,* that they were the "*sons of them that killed the prophets.*" The force of the inference contained in "*wherefore,*" is founded on the relation of "*sons,*" conveyed by the word, "*fathers.*" No doubt, the Scribes and Pharisees did not erect or adorn the monuments, for the purpose of expressing their approval of the deeds of their fathers, who killed the prophets, as appears (v. 30);—although St. Chrysostom, very improbably, however, thinks they erected these monuments as trophies, commemorative of the courage of their fathers, who would not permit themselves to be rebuked by the prophets—quite the contrary; they wished to show, externally, their reverence for the "*prophets,*" and their abhorrence of their murderers. But, as the act of raising monuments was susceptible of being construed into a testimony of respect for either those who slew others, or those who were slain, our Redeemer, who knew the hearts of the Pharisees, construes their act in the very opposite sense of what they intended it to bear, as if it were an approval of their fathers' misdeeds, since they were, in reality, not merely children, by nature, of these selfsame parents, but true followers of them, by the imitation of their vices.

"*You are witnesses against yourselves.*" St. Luke has (xi. 48), "*Truly you bear witness that you consent to the doings of your fathers: for, they killed them (the prophets), and you build their sepulchres.*" It is not so much on their external conduct, in building the

monuments of the prophets, and their professions, that our Redeemer's inference is founded. It is rather upon the knowledge which He had, as God, of their inward feelings in regard to Himself and His Apostles; and God sometimes interprets men's actions, not according to the meaning they would have attached to them, but according to the true sense that accords with their interior dispositions, which the infallible light of His omniscience penetrates. Thus, the Prophet Amos (v. 25, 26), charges the Jews, during the forty years' sojourn in the desert, with having offered up sacrifices only to Moloch and the stars; because, no matter what were their external professions during that time, their heart was borne towards the false worship of idols. In like manner, whatever might have been the external professions of the Pharisees, in the erection of monuments to those slain by their fathers, our Redeemer takes their act in a sense quite different from what they wished—a sense, however, quite in accordance with truth and their interior feelings and dispositions. Their act, no matter how accompanied with professions of respect for the prophets, was also susceptible of being construed into an approval of those who slew them. For, men never wished to perpetuate the deeds of their fathers, except such as they deemed worthy of commendation, and this construction of their act being in accordance with their internal feelings, as known to our Redeemer, He draws the conclusion, founded on truth, the very opposite, however, of what they hypocritically meant to be deduced from it. The conclusion is not derived from their external act, and their professions regarding the intention they had in raising the monuments, which were really praiseworthy; but, from the knowledge our Redeemer had of their feelings towards Himself, and the just of the New Law, quite the same as those of their fathers, whose worthy descendants they proved themselves to be.

32. "*Fill ye up, then,*" &c. "*Then,*" since your dispositions as regards the just are the same as those of your fathers, perfect their work, of killing the prophets of the Lord, by putting to death, as you are resolved on, the Lord of the prophets; as if He said: Complete what is wanting of impiety, to move God, in His indignation, utterly to ruin you.

The word, "*measure,*" contains an allusion to things sold by certain measure. It is only after the full measure is given, the full price is paid. So, there is a measure of guilt and iniquity, as well in the case of individuals as of entire nations, after which God pouring out the full vial of His wrath, utterly and inexorably ruins them. Thus, He waited for the murder of His eternal Son, before He utterly ruined Jerusalem. For, although He often chastised the Jews from time to time, for their ingratitude, their continual murmurings, their frequent relapses into idolatry, the murder of His prophets, still, these chastisements were tempered with mercy; and it was only when they had consummated the iniquity of their race, by putting to death His eternal Son, that God utterly abandoned and destroyed His people. In like manner (Gen. xv. 16), God says of the Amorrites, that "*their iniquities were not yet at the full.*" Four hundred years more elapsed before their iniquities were completed, and the whole race utterly destroyed by Moses and Josue. Similar was the treatment of the Amalecites, on account of the crimes of their fathers, and their unceasing hostility to the Jews (1 Kings xv. 16). The children and their ancestors are, in civil estimation, regarded as one. Hence, the merits or demerits of the parents redound to the children, when they imitate their example; and then, when the measure of iniquity is filled up, they suffer the full punishment of the mass of iniquity which had been accumulating for ages. Not that the children are punished more severely than their sins deserve; but, the circumstance of their having completed the measure of iniquity, pre-ordained by

God for punishment, of their having accumulated crime upon crime, so as to reach a certain height, causes God to regard them and their parents as one moral person, and to inflict on them, in the rigours of His justice, the punishment justly due, which He might have otherwise paternally withheld. "*that may come on you the blood shed*" (v. 35), as if the children morally participated in the crimes of the parents, whom they imitated.

From this verse, theologians deduce, that, in God's decrees, a certain measure and number of sins, a certain height of iniquity, is permitted, both to kingdoms, cities, and private individuals, before He fully and completely punishes them. But, after this is reached, then will He fully punish them. His vengeance, if slow, is always sure, and when long-deferred, it is fully compensated by the severity of the stroke. Who, then, should not tremble at the commission of sin, lest, by tilling up the defined measure of guilt, he should set bounds, as it were, to the Divine mercy, and force God, by the consummation of guilt—and this applies as well to entire nations as to individual sinners—to abandon him, and give him over to a reprobate sense. In case of relapse, after former forgiveness, the same may apply. "*De propitiato peccato noli esse sine metu.*"

The words, "*fill up,*" do not convey a precept. They are an instance of what might be termed an ironical permission, frequently met with in SS. Scripture. They convey a prediction of what is most certainly to happen the Pharisees, &c., owing to their hardened malice. A like example is found in the case of Judas, "*quod facis, fac citius*" (John xiii. 27).

TEXT.

33. *You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?*

34. *Therefore behold I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them you will put to death and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city.*

35. *That upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the just, even unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias whom you killed between the temple and the altar.*

36. *Amen I say to you all these things shall come upon this generation.*

37. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not?*

38. *Behold, your house shall be left to you, desolate.*

39. *For I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth till you say: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

COMMENTARY.

33. Our Redeemer here boldly denounces against these wicked men, with the view of deterring others from following their perverse example, the eternal torments of hell, which they had been earning for themselves, by their misdeeds, of which they had no idea of repenting.

"*Serpents, generation of vipers.*" The "*viper*" was the most venomous of serpents. Here, our Redeemer taxes the fiendish cunning—allusive to the old serpent—the deadly malignity and wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees. This malignity was especially evinced in their calumniating, and persecuting unto death, good and holy men; nay, the Redeemer of the world Himself, as the old serpent calumniated God. (Gen. iii.)

"How will you escape the judgment of hell?" Not, but they could do so, by doing penance for their sins; but in this our Redeemer predicts their final impenitence and obduracy in sin, as if He said: You may here escape, for a time, the judgment of men; but, you shall not be able to escape the judgment of hell, since you are determined to continue incorrigible and impenitent, notwithstanding all My miracles, teaching, threats, and promises.

34. "*Therefore.*" Some regard this as merely denoting transition, having no reference to what preceded; others say, it has reference to the words, "*generation of vipers,*" and to the following words, "*and some of them you will put to death,*" &c., as if He said: Because, then, you are the "*generation of vipers,*" the bad offspring of the worst parents, and are determined on filling up the measure of your fathers; you, as the faithful imitators of the murderers of the ancient prophets, notwithstanding your ostentatious display of justice, will persecute and put to death the Apostles, &c., whom I shall send to you; as your fathers, whom you surpass in wickedness, treated the saints and prophets of their day.

The word, "*therefore,*" according to this connexion, does not assign the cause of his sending the "*prophets,*" &c.; but, rather, it assigns the cause why the Jews were to persecute them.

"*I send you.*" I, who am God, to whom alone it belongs to send the prophets, shall "*send,*" &c., after My Resurrection and glorious Ascension, when sitting at the glorious right hand of My Father. In St. Luke (xi. 49), the form of expression is different. "*Therefore, also the Wisdom of God, said, I will send to them prophets,*" &c. By "*the Wisdom of God,*" is meant, Christ, the Wisdom, or Word of the Father. It is the same as, "*I send.*" Most likely, however, that the form recorded by St. Luke, of which St. Matthew gives the sense, was that used by our Redeemer. And He employed that ambiguous form to escape the odium of making Himself God. Following the form adopted by the ancient prophets, "*hæc dicit Dominus,*" our Redeemer uses the phrase, "*dixit* (that is, *decrevit*), *Dei sapientia,*" without, however, quoting from any of the ancient prophets, since He Himself was the Divine Interpreter of God's will, and saw into the secrets of futurity.

"*Prophets, and wise men, and Scribes.*" These different titles are given by our Redeemer to His Apostles and their successors, in accommodation to the titles with which the Jews designated their teachers, whose places were pre-eminently filled by His Apostles, and the preachers of the Gospel. Our Redeemer sometimes applied the *Jewish* titles to His followers (xiii. 52); St. Paul (1 Cor. i. 20). He bestowed on His Church the several gifts here referred to. Some of the Apostles were gifted with "*prophecy,*" properly so called (see Apocalypse of St. John, and several predictions of SS. Peter and Paul). The word might also bear the meaning often attached to it, viz., the gift of extraordinary interpretation of the Divine will, although this is contained in the following: "*Wise men,*" endowed not with human, but heavenly wisdom, which none of their adversaries could resist or gainsay (Luke xxi. 15).

"*Scribes,*" profoundly versed in the law of God, able to bring forth the *treasure of the new and the old* (xiii. 52). St. Luke (xi. 49), for, "*wise men and Scribes,*" has simply, "*Apostles,*" because the Apostles were all at once "*prophets,*" from their predicting future things; "*wise men,*" owing to the knowledge God gave them of His only Son; and "*Scribes,*" or doctors, owing to their intimate acquaintance with the SS. Scriptures, and the Divine law.

"*Some of them you will put to death,*" &c. Herod Agrippa put to death James

the Greater, with the approbation of the Jews (Acts xii. 2). They stoned Stephen (Acts vii. 58); precipitated James the Lesser from the temple (Eusebius, Lib. 2, Hist. c. 23). They crucified Simeon, son of Cleophas, second Bishop of Jerusalem (Hegesippus apud Euseb. Lib. 3, c. 16). They *scourged* St. Peter and the Apostles (Acts v. 40); St. Paul (2 Cor. xi. 24). They "*persecuted from city to city*," Paul and Barnabas. (Acts xiii. ; xiv.)

Although, by the murder of the Son of God, the Jews would seem to have filled up the measure of their iniquity; still, as His death had redeemed the world, He offered it for them, and gave them the last chance of salvation, by sending His representatives, whose persecution and rejection by them, showed their excessive obstinacy and impenitence.

35. "*That*," expresses not the cause, but the *consequence*. As if He said: Thus it shall come to pass, that "*upon you may come*," or you may suffer punishment for, "*all the just blood*," or the blood of all the just and innocent men, "*shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the just*," slain by Cain, whose children and faithful imitators you are, whose wicked example you are determined, too faithfully to imitate, in the murder of Me, and your brethren, the Apostles of the Lord. Cain was not, strictly speaking, by origin, the father of the Jews, although connected with them, as the brother of Seth, of whom were descended Abraham and the Jewish people; however, he might be said to be their mystical father, and they his children, by imitation, as the haughty and impious are said to be the children of the devil.

"*Even to the blood of Zacharias*," &c. Who was he? Some say, the father of the Baptist, whom, according to a tradition, the Jews slew in the temple, for defending the virginity of the Blessed Virgin, when she entered the temple, after giving birth to her Divine Son. (Origen, &c.) Some also assert, he was slain for having predicted the coming of Christ. "*Et tu puer propheta altissimi*," &c. But St. Jerome rejects these traditions as apocryphal. Others say, it refers to Zacharias, one of the lesser prophets, who is called the son of Barachias (Zach. i. 1). But, there is no account of his "*being slain between the porch and the altar*." The most generally received opinion, is that adopted by St. Jerome, who understands it of Zacharias, the son of Joiada, the High Priest, of whose murder, by the Jews, at the instigation of king Joas, for calling back the people from the worship of idols, there is mention made (2 Paralip. xxiv. 2). The only difficulty against this opinion, viz., that he was the son of Joiada, and not of *Barachias*, as here, is solved by St. Jerome, thus: he says, that, probably, Joiada had two names, Joiada and Barachias, as was usual among the Jews; or, that, probably, our Redeemer calls him by an *appellative*, and not by his *proper* name. *Barachias* means, the "*blessed of the Lord*," a title which Joiada eminently deserved for his superior sanctity. In confirmation of this opinion, St. Jerome says, he himself found in the Hebrew Bible used by the Nazarenes, the reading of this passage, "*Zacharias, the son of Joiada*." He was stoned by the Jews, in the hall of the Priests, which was between the temple or the vestibule of the Sanctum, and the altar of Holocausts, which altar was located in the hall of the Priests. Our Redeemer, then, selects him as the last of those slain, and Abel as the first; because, their blood alone is said, in SS. Scripture, to cry for vengeance (Gen. iv. 10; 2 Par. xxiv. 22). Moreover, although many prophets were slain since the days of Zacharias, the son of Joiada, he is the last whose murder by the Jews, is recorded in the SS. Scriptures, which, therefore, the Jews could not call in question or gainsay. Others say, there is reference to a certain Zacharias, the son of Baruch (or Barachias), whom, as Josephus informs us,

(De Bel. Jud. Lib. 5 c. 1), the Jewish zealots slew in the hall of the temple, after he had been acquitted by the seventy Judges, shortly before the final destruction of Jerusalem. According to these, the words of our Redeemer, "*you slew*," although the act was future, were uttered in the spirit of prophecy.

This latter opinion is embraced by Calmet, and it derives great probability from the circumstance, that if there be reference to any of the others, a very long interval should have elapsed between the murder of any of them, and the verification of the threat of Christ, regarding the final ruin of their city and race; whereas, in reference to this latter Zacharias, everything is verified—the place, the name, the time, immediately before the menaced ruin of Jerusalem. From the character of sanctity given by Josephus (Lib. 5, c. 1, de Bel. Jud.), of this Zacharias, it is to be supposed he was a Christian, since every trace of goodness had, at that time, abandoned the reprobate synagogue.

36. "*All these things*." All these past crimes, or, rather, the punishment so long deferred of these past crimes, particularly of all the innocent blood that was shed, "*Shall come upon this generation*," now living, when they shall be dispersed throughout the earth, and their city utterly ruined by Titus and Vespasian. Many of those whom our Redeemer addressed, lived to see the siege of Jerusalem, of which we have here a clear prophecy, as well as of the utter desolation of Judea, which began thirty-three years after this. This did not exceed one "*generation*." Our Redeemer adds this to strengthen His menace, and to induce them to strive to escape these threatened evils, by embracing the faith, and returning to penance.

37. "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem*," &c. Turning from the Scribes and Pharisees, whom He denounces in the preceding, our Redeemer now turns to the entire people of Jerusalem, represented by the multitude present (v. 1), and in accents the most pathetic, which show the excess of His love, of His sorrow and commiseration, He bewails the inefficacious result of all His toils and labours in their behalf, and predicts, as a consequence, their utter and irreparable ruin. This sublime, impassioned apostrophe was uttered, according to St. Luke (xiii. 34), not in Jerusalem, but elsewhere. However, it may be that our Redeemer employed it twice, or the Evangelist may have recorded it without reference to the place where it was uttered.

"*Jerusalem*," refers to the people of the city, and the repetition of the word indicates the impassioned state of our Redeemer's feelings. It also suggests the magnitude of the blessings conferred on the Jewish people, preferably to all the other nations of the earth, as if He said: O Jerusalem, beloved of God, singularly favoured, endowed with special privileges of grace, both external and internal, which thou hast so signally abused, by killing and stoning to death the prophets and all those that have been sent to reclaim thee.

"*Thou that killest the prophets*," as if He said: Among thy other distinctive marks, may be reckoned, that thou hast been constantly slaying the prophets of the Lord. Hence, our Redeemer says (Luke xiii. 33), "*It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem*." The Greek words for, "*killest*" and "*stonest*" (ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα . . . καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα), denotes *permanent action, past, present, and future*, which the article prefixed shows to be of a distinctive character.

"*How often*." By the ministry of the prophets in former days, by My own preaching, and by that of My disciples in these latter days, and by the interior inspirations of My heavenly grace.

"*Would I have gathered together,*" into My bosom, and brought back to the faith and true worship of one God, and have placed under My own paternal care and solicitude. "*Thy children,*" thy citizens, and all inhabitants of Judea, of which thou art the capital, and to which thou shouldst be a model in serving and worshipping the true God, and bringing back those who are dispersed abroad, wandering through all the mazes of error, and crooked paths of sin, and precipitating themselves into hell. "*Gather together,*" contains an allusion to the metaphor of the hen collecting her chickens under her wings to protect and shelter them.

"*As the hen doth gather her chickens,*" &c. This affecting and touching similitude, feelingly expresses the loving care and solicitude our Redeemer always felt for the unhappy Jerusalem, and the many efforts He made to save her, as in xxii. 3, &c., "He weeps over Jerusalem with the affection of a father" (St. Jerome). The will of God, in reference to the salvation of the Jews, is what theologians term the *voluntas signi*, manifested by the adoption of means amply and abundantly sufficient to effect the object wished for. This He often showed, "*quoties volui,*" from the very beginning, by sending His prophets, by employing mandates, threats, and promises. The Divine nature of our Redeemer is here tacitly implied and hinted at.

"*And thou wouldst not,*" shows, that it is through his own fault, in not corresponding with Grace, man perishes; that man's will is free, and that it is by freely opposing God's will, he brings ruin on himself.

How applicable is not this impassioned apostrophe of our Divine Redeemer to many a Christian soul—symbolized by the unhappy Jerusalem—upon whom God bestowed singular and abundant graces, and whom He repeatedly invited and pressed to return to Him, "*revertimini, revertimini, et quare moriemini?*" but over whose infidelity, ingratitude, and resistance to heavenly grace the angels of peace weep bitterly.

38. "*Behold,*" shows, that what He menaces shall soon come to pass. "*Your house.*" By this, St. Jerome understands the Temple of Jerusalem, in which the Jews gloried and placed so much confidence (Jer. vii. 4); and, although before this, it was always called the house of the Lord, still, now, in consequence of its soon becoming the scene of impiety and murder, soon to be deserted by God, and destroyed for their sins, it is called, "*their house.*" (St. Jerome, &c.) Others, more probably, understand it, of the city of Jerusalem, and the entire land of Judea, the temple also included. To this David refers when alluding to the sufferings of Christ—which our Redeemer insinuates here to be the cause of their misfortunes—he says, "*fiat domus eorum deserta.*"

"*Desolate,*" deserted by its inhabitants, and laid waste by the Romans; or, perhaps, it rather refers to their being abandoned by God's grace, which was to be transferred to the Gentiles. This would seem to be implied in the following verse, where a reason is assigned for this desertion; or rather, where the manner of its accomplishment, is described: "*For, I say to you,*" &c. (v. 39), and the spiritual abandonment and reprobation by God to be followed by their temporal ruin, which was effected by the Romans. To this Jeremias refers: "*Reliqui domum meam, dimisi hereditatem meam.*" Judea was to become the synagogue of Satan, and afterwards the prey of the Roman eagle; its people to be dispersed, and scattered throughout the earth, by Titus and Vespasian.

39. "*For, I say to you,*" &c. This cannot refer to the acclamations of the Jews on His entering Jerusalem. For, these acclamations occurred on the preceding Sunday

(Palm Sunday). The words now uttered by our Lord are described as spoken on the following Tuesday, three days before His Passion. Whether St. Matthew records these words out of place, by inserting them here, although spoken elsewhere, because well suited to this passage, matters but little; although, it would be expected of him to observe a consistent narrative in his history.

Patrizzi (Lib. 1 de Evang. Matth. Quæstio iv. § 1), is of opinion, that these words refer to our Redeemer's entrance into Jerusalem, on Palm Sunday. According to him, St. Matthew did not follow the exact order of time in this, as happens to him, in several other occurrences in the life of our Redeemer. Hence, St. Luke, narrates this prediction of our Redeemer (xiii. 35), as uttered, long before the words referred to were spoken (xix. 38). The words are commonly understood, of His coming to judgment. Then, the great bulk of the Jewish nation, whom He addresses in the word "*you*," shall be converted to the faith; and our Redeemer means to convey, that, after the time at which He now addresses them, they shall not again see Him corporally, until the end of the world, when they shall be converted, and shall, in the fulness of faith and spiritual joy, exclaim "*Blessed is He*," &c. Others, who also understand the passage of His last coming in judgment, say, the words mean: you shall not again see Me corporally, until the time I shall come in My glory, when you shall be reluctantly forced to pay Me the homage you now wilfully refuse, and obliged to admit, I am the Blessed One of the Lord whom you now reject, "*videbunt in quem transierunt*." Our Redeemer was wont to refer to His second coming, when dealing with those who attended not to His first coming. Hence, in His Passion, he says, "*et erunt amen videbunt filium hominis*," &c. (Matt. xxvi. 64.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Redeemer, leaving the temple, probably for the last time, after having denounced the Scribes and Pharisees, predicts the utter ruin of that magnificent structure (1-2). His Apostles propose a twofold question—1st. Regarding the time of the menaced ruin of Jerusalem, and the final end of all things, which was to precede His glorious coming; and, 2ndly, regarding the precursory signs of these events. Replying to the second question first, regarding the precursory signs, He gives, as far as verse 14, the signs that would apply equally to the ruin of Jerusalem, and the end of the world (3-14). He next gives the signs which apply, directly, to the ruin of Jerusalem, and, in a *secondary* way, to the final end of all things; the former being a type of the latter (15-28). He, then, gives the precursory signs of the final end of all things, when the Sovereign Judge shall come to judge all mankind (29-35). Replying to the first question, regarding the time of His *second coming*, He tells them, they must be ever kept in uncertainty on this point; and He, therefore, concludes, they should be always prepared for it, always on the watch, and not to be taken by surprise—ever engaged in the performance of good works (36-51).

TEXT.

AND Jesus being come out of the temple, went away. And his disciples came to show him the buildings of the temple.

2. And he answering said to them: Do you see all these things? Amen I say to you there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone that shall not be destroyed.

3. And when he was sitting on Mount Olivet, the disciples came to him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the consummation of the world?

4. And Jesus answering, said to them: Take heed that no man seduce you:

5. For many will come in my name saying, I am Christ: and they will seduce many.

6. *And you shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled. For these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

7. *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes in places:*

8. *Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows.*

9. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall put you to death: and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake.*

10. *And then shall many be scandalized: and shall betray one another: and shall hate one another.*

11. *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce many.*

12. *And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold.*

13. *But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.*

14. *And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And Jesus being come out of the temple, went away.*" After having been engaged during the day in preaching in the temple, He left it, probably, for the last time, as we read nowhere that He returned there again, and proceeded, as was His wont, to Mount Olivet (Luke xxi. 37), and lodged with Magdalen and Martha (A. Lapide). This occurred on the Wednesday before His Passion; and thus He closes His public ministry with the awful reproofs and predictions contained in the preceding chapter.

In the Greek, the word, "*temple*," is not joined with "*came out*," but with "*went away*" (ἐπορεύετο ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ).

"*And His disciples*," who heard Him menace the temple with utter ruin (xxiii. 38), in the hope of moving Him to commiseration, so as to revoke His sentence, and spare the doomed city, "*came to show Him the buildings of the temple*"—the quality of the stones, and its magnificent proportions (Mark xiii.)—the splendid gifts with which it was enriched (Luke xxi. 5). The Zorobabelic Temple was rebuilt by Herod; and viewed, either in regard to its strength of structure, its magnificence, its costly materials, its rare beauty and ornamentation, it was an object of wonder and admiration (see Josephus de Antiq. Jud., Lib. 15, c. 11, where he gives a full description of the materials employed by Herod in rebuilding the temple). In directing the attention of our Lord to the magnificence of the temple, which was the glory of the Jewish people, the disciples wished to convey, what a pity it would be, if such a noble monument of piety were utterly destroyed, as had been menaced. Could such a thing be possible? In the minds of the Jews, the destruction of the temple and the *end of the world* were coeval, or, at least, some change in the constitution of the world should take place at the destruction of the temple (Bloomfield). The magnificence of earthly buildings can never appease the anger of God, provoked by sin. It availed the Jews but little of old to say, "*the temple of the Lord*," &c. (Jer. vii. 4.) St. Mark (xiii. 1) says, only *one* of His disciples addressed our Lord on this occasion. But there is no contradiction between him and St. Matthew. It may be, that the disciples had previously spoken among themselves on the subject; and that one, on the part of the others, addressed Him. Hence, they addressed Him through their spokesman; or, it may be that, after one had spoken, the others also spoke out, as is mentioned here by St. Matthew.

2. "*Do you see all these things?*" that is, consider again and again, this magni-

ificent temple. This He says, in order to direct their attention the more to the judgment of God, and to show the deliberation with which He announces the following solemn threat, to which He prefixes the usual form of asseveration. "*Amen, I say,*" &c.; I assert it as a thing that shall unquestionably take place.

"*There shall not be a stone,*" &c. These words denote, utter destruction and ruin. They were verified in the destruction of the temple by the Romans. They were, however, verified afterwards more literally still; and the Jews themselves were made the instruments of this literal fulfilment, when, at the instance of Julian the apostate, they undertook to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. They came together from all quarters of the globe. They lavishly contributed their choicest gifts towards the expenses of the work, aided by the State support and encouragement of the Imperial apostate, who thus sought to falsify the prediction of our Redeemer. They set about vigorously to work; and, in clearing the foundations, they did not leave a single stone upon another, of those left untouched by the Romans, in their work of destruction, so that the prophecy of our Redeemer was fully verified. The work was put a stop to, as we learn from Ammianus Marcellinus (Lib. 23), Socrates (Lib. 3, c. 20), and Sozomen (Lib. 5, c. ult.), by the Divine interposition. Horrible balls of fire issued from the foundations, rendering them inaccessible to the scorched workmen; and owing to repeated earthquakes, whatever was cleared away during the day, was thrown back, the next night, into the trenches, so that they were reluctantly obliged to discontinue the work altogether (see Alban. Butler, *Lives of SS.*, March 18).

3. "*And when He was sitting on Mount Olivet.*" Our Redeemer, after preaching in the temple during the day, went out each evening to Bethania, whence, after refection, He retired to Mount Olivet, which was just nigh, where He "*spent the night*" (Luke xxi. 37), most likely, in prayer and preparation for His approaching Passion. It may be, on this occasion, that on His way to Bethania, and wearied from His labours, and weak from fasting during the day, He sat on Mount Olivet; or that, after partaking of supper, He returned to spend the night, and then sat down, "*over against the temple*" (Mark xiii. 3), of which He had a full view from Mount Olivet. This happened, according to some (Maldonatus), on the fourth day (viz., Wednesday) after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. According to others (Jansenius, &c.), on the third. The view of the temple, recalled to the minds of His disciples His prophecy relating to its destruction. Possibly, also, our Redeemer, in viewing the temple, may have again spoken of its coming destruction. "*The disciples came to Him privately.*" Mark (xiii. 3) says, only four of them did so. It may be, that these four alone spoke and questioned Him, with the concurrence of the rest. This they did "*privately,*" away from the multitude. Others interpret, "*privately*" (A. Lapide), apart from the other disciples. These four referred to, who were most intimate with Him, question Him on this very delicate subject, which it was most dangerous to speak of publicly, lest it should reach the Scribes. St. Stephen's death is owing to a charge of his having spoken on this subject (Acts vi. 14).

"*Tell us,*" to whom you are accustomed to disclose what you do not wish to make known to all, "*when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign?*" &c. Mark (xiii. 5) and Luke (xxi. 7) have only—1st. "*When shall these things be?*" which have been so often prophesied by Thee, regarding the destruction of Jerusalem; and 2ndly. "*The sign when all these things shall be begin to be fulfilled,*" regarding Thy glorious coming; whereas, St. Matthew has, for the second question, "*What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the world?*" Hence, some commentators, with

St. Jerome, divide this latter question in St. Matthew into two, and say, the question of the disciples was *threefold*—1. The time of this menaced ruin of the temple; 2. Its sign; 3. The sign of the end of the world. It seems most probable, that the second question in St. Matthew is the same as that in Mark and Luke. The disciples imagined, from the parables of our Lord (Matt. xxii. 1, &c.; Luke xix. 12), that the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the temple, would take place simultaneously with the destruction of the world; after which, they supposed our Redeemer's glorious reign would commence. On the latter point, their ideas were of a very carnal character. Hence, they proposed two questions: the *first* regarded the destruction of Jerusalem, which they supposed would take place at His glorious coming; the *second*, the signs of these events, which they supposed to be near at hand. Our Redeemer first answers the second question, regarding the signs of His coming; and the question of the *time* in the next place.

4. There is a great diversity of opinion among commentators, regarding the meaning of the several parts of this chapter, and the events to which they refer. Some refer them to the destruction of Jerusalem; others, to the destruction of all things at the end of the world. St. Chrysostom, whose opinion is adopted by Jansenius Gandav. (Concord. c. cxxii.), understands the chapter, as far as verse 23 exclusively, to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem; and all that preceded that event, as recorded by Josephus and Eusebius, perfectly squares with what our Redeemer says here, as far as verse 23, not even excepting the preaching of the Gospel (verse 14), to the entire world, which, St. Chrysostom asserts, took place before the year 70, the period of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Others, with St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and Ven. Bede, whose opinion is preferred by Maldonatus, hold, that our Redeemer treats, as far as verse 23, of both the destruction of Jerusalem and that of the world, without distinguishing one from the other; and that, from the text, we must see to which He may specially refer in any particular verse. For, as the questions of the Apostles confusedly referred to both, our Redeemer answers their questions as they proposed them, not wishing to separate His allusion to the end of the world distinctly from His allusion to the end of Jerusalem, lest, after the destruction of the temple, the Apostles and His followers might rest too secure, in respect to the distant approach of the Day of Judgment. It may be, that our Redeemer connects the description of the Day of Judgment with the destruction of Jerusalem, and speaks indifferently of both, in order to convey to us, that the woes and dreadful sufferings of the Jews, at the taking of Jerusalem, were a type and the prelude of the evils which shall fall upon the wicked, the enemies of God, during the persecuting reign of Antichrist, at the approach of the final destruction of the earth. In truth, the precursory signs regarding "*false prophets*," &c., which indicated the near approach of the ruin of Jerusalem, shall also usher in the Day of Judgment. (Apoc. x., &c.) This latter opinion seems very likely. The predictions regarding the two events are so closely interwoven in some passages, and the expressions and imagery employed, in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, so applicable to the Day of Judgment, that we may fairly hold, that in the passage where He may *primarily* and *directly* refer to the former event, He, in a *secondary* sense, alludes to the latter. This *secondary*, or implied sense, is, by no means, unusual in prophetic writings, in which two subjects, a *primary* and *subordinate* one, are treated of simultaneously, the same words being applied to both.

"*Take heed*," are words of earnest caution. "*That no one seduce you*," from My faith from the law of God, from the Gospel. Before giving the precursory signs which

His disciples were desirous of ascertaining, probably, out of curiosity, and from a desire of knowing how soon they were to be made sharers in His glorious kingdom, of which they still conceived carnal notions, our Redeemer forewarns them of the evils and dangers they should expect to occur, that thus they might not be moved when they saw them come to pass, as He had predicted. These are, the appearance of false teachers and impostors—wars and other calamities—persecution and several temptations, as well from false brethren as from impostors; finally, the dreadful carnage and misery which would be suffered in the actual ruin of the city, to avoid which, those who are in Judea should fly and betake themselves elsewhere.

5. "*Many will come in My name, saying I am Christ.*" Such were Theodas, to whom Gamaliel refers (Acts v. 36). Such was the Egyptian impostor mentioned by Josephus (Lib. 2, Bel. c. 12; Acts xxi. 38); Simon Magus (Acts viii.), called "*the power of God*," who gave himself out as the Blessed Trinity, and by his incantations, succeeded at Rome in having a statue erected for himself on the Tiber, with the inscription, "*Simoni, Deo Magno.*" Such, in fine, were the entire swarm of heretics who then appeared, and are called by St. John, "*many Antichrists.*" These gave themselves out for Christs, because they pretended to have in view to free the people from the yoke of tyranny, to become their saviours and liberators, which was the office of Christ. Instead of this, they only brought on them speedy destruction and utter ruin.

"*And shall seduce many,*" particularly from among the Jews, who, having rejected Christ, who came in the name of His Father, will receive and adhere to the impostors who came of themselves, unsent. History testifies how this was verified at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem; and to it St. Luke refers, when he says (xxi. 8), "*And the time is at hand; go ye not, therefore, after them.*" No doubt, the same shall be true of the period of the end of the world. Then, shall Antichrist work wonders, to seduce them that perish. (2 Thess. ii. 9, 10, &c.)

6. "*And you shall hear of wars,*" &c. For "*and*," the Vulgate has "*enim*," "*for*," and the Greek, *δε*, "*but*." If the Vulgate reading be adopted, "*for*," has reference to what follows; as if He said: See that you be not troubled, *because of your "hearing of wars,"* &c. In the Greek, it is a digression to another precursory sign. Our Redeemer having warned them against being seduced from the path of justice by the blandishments of false teachers, now cautions them against being turned aside by the fear of evil. "*Wars*," tumults, seditions, &c., and what is more embarrassing and terrifying, "*rumours of wars.*" This was literally verified at the destruction of Jerusalem. The history of the wars and bloodshed among the Jews, which preceded the final destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as well in Jerusalem itself, as in the provinces, is given by Josephus (Lib. 2 de Bello, Jud. to the end of Lib. 7). The same shall happen, no doubt, at the end of the world (Apocalypse). So that this second sign applies to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world.

"*For, these things must come to pass,*" not from absolute necessity; but, as a matter of consequent necessity, like scandals, heresies, &c., considering the malice of man, on the one hand; and the decrees of God, drawing good out of the evil, which He permits, on the other. "*These things*," wars, and rumours of wars. Why, then, should men be disturbed or turned aside from the straight path, by events which cannot be avoided, that must come to pass by a just judgment of God?

"*But the end is not yet,*" that is, the end of the evils, which are to fall on Jerusalem. Greater ones still are to follow, or, "*the end*" of the world, which is to

be preceded by the wars of Antichrist. (St. Jerome, Theophylact, &c.) The word, "*end*," may, probably, refer to both, one being the type and precursor of the other.

7. "*For, nation shall rise against nation.*" This shall occur at the end of the world. History testifies how it *did* happen previous to the ruin of Jerusalem (Josephus de Bello, Lib. 2, de Bello, cc. 11-25; Hegesippus Lib. 2, cc. 11-17). St. Jerome, Ven. Bede, St. Augustine, &c., say, that as our Redeemer had been asked by His Apostles in an indistinct sort of way about the end of Jerusalem and the end of the world, so, He replies to both indistinctly, mixing up one with the other. This He does as far as verse 15, in order that the Apostles and the faithful would be kept in a state of suspense, and be always prepared for both events. Then, from verse 15 to verse 29, He treats exclusively of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the signs that shall precede it. From that, to the close of the chapter, He treats of the phenomena that shall precede and usher in the end of the world.

"*And there shall be pestilences, and famines,*" &c. That the Jews suffered famine before the final destruction of Jerusalem, is attested by Josephus (Lib. 20, Antiq. c. 2, 3); the same also appears from Acts xi. 28, &c. "*Pestilences*" are a concomitant of famine. Although Josephus says nothing of it; still, it is what commonly happens. "*Earthquakes in places,*" that is, in different places. The only record we have of any *earthquakes* before the destruction of Jerusalem, is that left by Eusebius in Chronicon, relative to an earthquake which, in the reign of Nero, occurred at Rome, whereby three cities in Asia were destroyed. Josephus, who makes mention of famine in Judea, which pestilence usually accompanies, is silent regarding the occurrence of any earthquake there, probably, being intent on recording more signal calamities.

We have all these signs repeated in latter times, pointing out, that the world is now growing old, and approaching its end, as the repeated attacks of illness warns the patient, who grows weaker after each, that he is to expect his end to be arriving.

St. Luke (xxi. 11), adds—"and terrors from heaven, and there shall be great signs." These are to precede the end of the world (Apoc. viii. and ix.; see also verse 29 of this chapter). They also preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. For instance, a terrible comet, in the form of a sword, hung over Jerusalem for twelve months before its destruction. During the assemblage of the people at the Pasch, a bright mid-day light shone for half an hour at night, in the temple, and voices were heard in the temple, crying out, "*Let us remove hence.*" The Oriental gate of the temple, which twenty men could hardly move, opened of its own accord, during the dead hour of night. In the air were seen armed bands, chariots, and fighting. Four years before the commencement of the Jewish war, while Jerusalem yet enjoyed profound peace and abundance, a poor plebeian husbandman, named Jesus, the son of Ananias, at the Feast of Tabernacles, began suddenly to cry out, "A voice from the east; a voice from the west; a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem and against the temple; a voice against the bridegroom, and against the bride; a voice against all the people." This was his unceasing cry day and night, as he passed through the lanes and streets of the city. Some persons of rank, unable to endure words of such bad omen, caused him to be apprehended and scourged. At every stroke, he repeated, in a plaintive and doleful tone, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem. When Jerusalem was besieged by Titus, his predictions were found to be verified. He then went round the walls of the city and began to cry, "Woe, woe to the city; woe to the people; woe to the temple;" on which, having added, "Woe to myself," he was killed by a stone discharged from one of the engines of the enemy (Josephus, Lib. vi. c. 5, de Bel. Jud.; Eusebius, Lib. 3, Histor. c. 8)

8. Greater evils still shall succeed, of which the preceding are but the premonitory symptoms. The Greek word for sorrow (*lutoon*), means, the *throes of childbirth*. The idea is, that the calamities spoken of, compared with those which are to follow, are just like the premonitory symptoms of approaching childbirth, compared with the acute throes of parturition. This is an illustration quite familiar, and frequently to be met with in SS. Scripture. And, in truth, whosoever reads the account of the calamities which occurred in the actual sacking of Jerusalem, when on it fell "*all the just blood shed since that of Abel*," &c. (xxiii. 35), see Josephus, Lib. 6 and 7, de Bello, can see how this was verified. The same applies also to the precursory signs that shall precede, and the dreadful evils that shall take place at the destruction of the world, when a just God shall discharge the full vial of His wrath on the devoted heads of His guilty enemies.

9. Having cautioned them against being disturbed by the evils that shall happen others, our Redeemer now forewarns them against the evils that may happen themselves, lest they might imagine that they themselves would be free from calamities, so that when these things would happen, they might not be disturbed. For, hitherto, they were only thinking of the joys of His glorious kingdom.

"*That they shall never be given up to be afflicted*," that is, men shall so afflict you in divers ways, that you would seem to be given over to tribulation.

"*Shall put you to death*," &c. The history of the infant Church, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, informs us how the Apostles and the faithful were persecuted, and put to death, and hated, for the name of Christ, both by Jews and Gentiles. These things happened even *before* the menaced evils had fallen on Jerusalem. For, St. John was the only one of the Apostles who survived its destruction. Hence, St. Luke says (xxi. 12), "*but, before all things, they will lay their hands on you*," &c. It is observed, that St. Matthew does not so minutely or circumstantially detail the evils which were to befall the Apostles, as is done by St. Luke and St. Mark; but this is accounted for, as St. Matthew had done so already. (x. 17, &c.)

The same shall happen before the end of the world, in the persecuting reign of Antichrist, whose persecution, preceded by those remarkable ones commenced under Nero, shall be the last and the most dreadful that the Church had ever encountered.

10. "*Many shall be scandalized*," &c. From fear of death or persecution, they shall apostatize from the faith. Many Christians, in the early period referred to, had abandoned the faith, and from faithful brethren, became enemies and false brethren, betraying their nearest friends, to gain the favour of the great, and hated one another. This intestine war is referred to by St. Paul (2 Cor. xi.), a *julus fratribus*. Others understand it of Pagans, who, seeing the persecution endured by the Christians, "*shall be scandalized*," alienated from the faith, so that "*a brother shall betray a brother into death . . . and children shall rise up against their parents*" (Mark xiii. 12). "*Hate one another*," has reference, probably, to the hatred of apostates for their former associates, even when they did not go the length of betraying them.

11. "*False prophets*." By these are meant the heretics, who sprang up in the very midst of the persecutions of the Church. These, while they confess the true Christ, and pretend to be teachers sent by God, shall, pretending to act in His name, disseminate error. Of such St. Paul complains. (2 Cor. xi.; Philip. iii.; Gal. iv., &c.) So does St. Peter (2 Peter ii.); and St. John terms them Antichrists. St. Paul

predicts their coming (Acts xx. 30). Among these false prophets, might be counted Ebion, Cerinthus, the Nicolaites, and the whole swarm of the early *Gnostics*. In latter times, Luther, Calvin, and last of all, Antichrist.

12. This is another great evil. In consequence of the prevalence, and superior force of iniquity, that is, of the persecutions of tyrants, of infidelity, of heresy, of the hatred borne the faithful, of the seduction by "*false prophets*," &c., "*the charity of many shall grow cold*." By "*charity*," is commonly understood, Christian charity, the love of God, in the first place, from whom they will revolt, having begun before to love Him by faith. To such, St. Paul refers, "*erunt homines seipso amantes*," &c. (2 Tim. ii.) To this charity he refers, "*quis nos separabit a charitate Christi?*" (Rom. viii.) It also embraces the love of our neighbour. Those who had hitherto the charity to relieve their Christian brethren, will, owing to the pressure of persecution, refuse all assistance, lest they might appear as Christians themselves. Of this we have an example (2 Tim. iv. 16), where St. Paul says, he was forsaken by all his former friends. Our Redeemer forewarns His Apostles of all this, in order to strengthen them against these trials, whenever they might occur. The words of this verse seem to be the conclusion, or rather, the brief repetition, of what was asserted in verses 10, 11.

13. "*Shall persevere*." The Greek, *υπομεινας*, means, *enduring*, bearing up against trials; which is more clearly expressed by St. Luke (xxi. 19), "*in patientia vestra*," &c. (*ὑπομονῇ*). "*Shall persevere*" in the faith and charity of Christ, "*unto the end*" of the persecution, or rather end of his life, so as to endure patiently these trials, shall obtain eternal salvation. From this it appears, that "*the charity*" in the preceding refers to the charity of God, the loss of which entails eternal death; whosoever shall not persevere in it, "*shall not be saved*." The words of this verse also show, that by "*charity growing cold*," is meant the entire loss of charity, since it is contrasted with that perseverance which alone insures eternal life. Our Redeemer having, in the preceding, fortified them against the evils from *without*, on the part of infidels (v. 9), and from *within*, on the part of the false brethren (vv. 10, 11), now consoles them with the assurance, that their patient endurance and perseverance to the end in these trials shall insure their salvation, which is expressed by St. Luke in another form, "*in patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras*," that is, shall *save* your souls. The word for "*patience*," *υπομονη*, in St. Luke (xxi. 19), is the same as that for "*persevere*," here (*υπομεινας*).

14. The Redeemer gives the *fifth sign*, to meet an objection which might tacitly present itself on the part of the Apostles, as if they said: If the world be thus confused, and the obstacles to our preaching the Gospel so great, why then send us forward to preach? Our Redeemer tells them, that, notwithstanding these obstacles, the Gospel shall be preached, and that successfully, before the end shall come. Hence, relying on the Divine promise, they should vigorously persevere—undervaluing all obstacles—in preaching "*this Gospel of the kingdom*," which announces the opening of "*the kingdom of heaven*," by the blood and redemption of Christ, so long shut against men.

"*For a testimony*," &c. So that this preaching of the Gospel shall serve as a testimony to all the Gentile nations, of the paternal providence, love, and solicitude of God for their salvation, through Christ, who omitted no means of insuring it. The universal preaching of it, notwithstanding the opposing obstacles, shall confirm

their faith in God's power, and thus be a "*testimony*," and shall render them inexcusable, if they reject it; or, it may mean, that it will serve as a testimony of the love of God for the Jews, to whom salvation was offered in the first instance by Christ, which they, having obstinately and perfidiously rejected, the Gospel was, in consequence, transferred to the nations who were substituted for them in the favour of God. It would be made clearly known to the entire world, that the Jews were justly abandoned on account of their multiplied crimes, which culminated in the murder of His eternal Son, and the persecution of His servants. The former seems to be the more probable opinion, which understands "*testimony*," of the clear proof, which the preaching of the Gospel, in the midst of insuperable obstacles, among the Gentiles, would give them of God's power, and of the Divine origin of the Gospel thus preached. This would confirm and strengthen their faith.

It is disputed whether reference is here made to the destruction of Jerusalem, or to the end of the world. It most likely refers to both. Our Redeemer consoles His Apostles with the assurance, that before the menaced evils shall fall on the unhappy Jerusalem, the Gospel shall be preached throughout the world. That this was done, we are assured by St. Paul (Rom. i. 8; x. 18; Col. i. 5, 6, 23). In all these passages, the Apostle says the Gospel was preached throughout the world, in the sense that it reached the principal portions of the then known world; and if we bear in mind how much St. Paul himself did, to how many countries he preached the Gospel (Rom. xv. 19), it is not to be wondered at that the Apostles, who were animated with the same spirit, should, after parcelling out the world for the theatre of their labours, have preached the faith through all the parts of the then known world. This happened before the ruin of Jerusalem, when the Apostles were all dead except St. John. Hence, the words can apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the same shall be true of the end of the world. The evils which preceded the ruin of Jerusalem, the carnage, bloodshed, and dreadful calamities which occurred at it, are but a type of another *end*; of the still greater calamities and evils of every kind, which shall precede the Day of Judgment, and shall occur on it. The word "*end*," then, refers to the end of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, of which the former, with all its circumstances, was a very expressive type.

"*Then the end.*" How soon after the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, in a limited sense, the end of Jerusalem was to come, or after it is preached in a more perfect and extended sense, the end of the world was to take place, our Redeemer does not say; but, neither event was to occur until the Gospel was preached throughout the world, in a limited sense, as regarded the end of Jerusalem, and in a more extended and perfect sense, embracing all parts of the world successively, as regards the end of all things. God wished to have the Gospel preached throughout the nations, before the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews; because, He did not wish utterly to abandon one people till He had adopted to Himself another, through the preaching of the Gospel. And, moreover, He wished, by this means, to make known to the entire world the impiety and ingratitude of the Jews, which drew down upon them the signal chastisements of heaven; and this event would be calculated to confirm the faith of the Gentile world. He wished it to be preached in a most extended and Catholic sense, to all the nations, before the end of the world, out of His infinitely merciful desire to reject no nation, however barbarous, but to offer to all the means of salvation. It is, then, better to understand our Redeemer as referring, in the first fourteen verses of this chapter, both to the end of the world and to the end of Jerusalem indifferently, as well as to the events which were to occur at both. Hardly any event or circumstance

recorded in the first fourteen verses that will not apply to both, the one being intended to be a type and forerunner of the other.

TEXT.

15. *When therefore you shall see the "abomination of desolation," which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth, let him understand.*

16. *Then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains:*

17. *And he that is on the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house:*

18. *And he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat.*

19. *And wo to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days.*

20. *But pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath.*

21. *For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be.*

22. *And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened.*

23. *Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there: do not believe him.*

24. *For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect.*

25. *Behold I have told it to you, beforehand.*

26. *If therefore they shall say to you: Behold he is in the desert; go ye not out: Behold he is in the closets, believe it not.*

27. *For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

28. *Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together.*

COMMENTARY.

15. "*When, therefore you shall see,*" &c. "*Therefore,*" would seem not so much to express a conclusion, as a continuation of the discourse, and to indicate that our Redeemer was passing on to another topic, or to another *sign* of the "*end*," concerning which they questioned Him. Having described or pointed out the signs, common to the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the world, indifferently, in the foregoing, He now proceeds to give the distinctive signs of the destruction of Jerusalem, in reply to the first question, "*When shall these things be?*" as far as verse 29; and then, He commences to give the distinctive marks of the approaching destruction of the world, to the close of the chapter. In giving the signs of both indifferently in the foregoing, our Redeemer wishes to impress upon us the dreadful nature of the evils and woes that shall befall the wicked at the end of the world; since, of these, the shocking evils inflicted on Jerusalem, the bare recital of which, even at this remote period, makes us shudder, were but a mere figure—evils, the very sight of which, forced Titus, this hardened man of blood, at the head of the iron legions of Rome, stretching forth his hands, to invoke Heaven as witness, that he was in no way responsible for these unutterable woes. (Josephus de Bel. Jud. Lib. v. c. 10, &c.)

"*The abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.*" In these words, there is allusion to Daniel (ix. 27), "*there shall be in the temple abomination of desolation: and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation, and to the end,*" because, the temple, no matter what efforts may be made, never can be rebuilt. In xii. 11, "*the abomination unto desolation shall be set up,*" &c., Daniel speaks of the end of the world, whereas in ix. 27, he speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem, to which our Redeemer distinctly refers here. Commentators are greatly divided as to what "*the abomination of*"

desolation," means. Those who say, there is allusion here to the end of the world, (Irenæus, &c.), mean by it, Antichrist, who "*shall sit in the temple of God . . . as if he were God*" (2 Thess. ii. 4). But, it is clear from St. Luke (xxi. 20), where, for "*abomination of desolation*," we read, "*when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand*," that our Redeemer distinctly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, of which He here gives a premonitory sign in reply to the question of the disciples; and, moreover, in the passage quoted from Daniel, there is no allusion to the reign of Antichrist, but only to the desolation of Jerusalem; hence, various interpretations of the words, in connexion with this event, are given. By it, some understand, the statue of Caesar, placed by Pilate, in the temple; or, the equestrian statue of Adrian, which, St. Jerome tells us, was placed in the *sacrum sanctorum*. But, although a statue or idol was an abomination with the Jews (see 1 Mach. i. 57, where the Greek for, "*abominable idol of desolation*," is the same as here, *βδελύγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως*), and the words, "*standing in the holy place*," would suit this interpretation; still, neither statue could be referred to, as a sign of the devastation of Jerusalem. For, the placing of Caesar's statue happened before our Redeemer spoke these words (if it was placed there at all by Pilate, which is questioned by some, as Josephus says nothing about it), and that of Adrian was placed there after the destruction of Jerusalem, and could not, therefore, serve as a warning, to leave a city *that was to be destroyed*. Hence, some commentators understand by it, the army of the Romans, who, in approaching and entering Jerusalem, in a hostile spirit, would not hesitate to display their idols on their banners, and offer sacrifice to their gods. These things were an abomination to the Jews, and this abomination portended desolation and utter ruin. And they would "*stand on the holy place*," that is, Jerusalem, which the Evangelist calls, the holy city (iv. 5). It was such as yet, not having been yet wholly abandoned by God. This refers to the time of Cœstius Gallus, prefect of Syria, who surrounded Jerusalem with an army; but afterwards, raised the siege, and retired inglorious from before the walls of Jerusalem. It could not refer to the final destruction, under Titus, as then, there was no opportunity for escaping. Others, by "*abomination of desolation*," understand, the occupation of the temple by seditious Jews and turbulent malefactors (the Zealots), who got possession of the temple at the time of Cœstius, and held it for three years and a half, in spite of the Jews themselves, until its final destruction by Titus. These made the sacred enclosures of the holy house, a place of carnage and a citadel of defence. They were guilty of the greatest atrocities within its walls, and filled the different halls with pools of innocent blood, sparing neither priests nor people. (Josephus de Bel. Jud., Lib. iv. c. 3, 5, 6, &c.) This seems to be the most probable interpretation, because these really stood in the temple, as Daniel predicted. They profaned it, and committed atrocities there, and this was both the sign and immediate cause of its destruction. For, had they given it up, the Romans would have spared it. Perhaps, however, it might be better to understand the words, of the Roman invading army, and of the Jewish Zealots, who defended the temple. For, the besiegers and defenders of Jerusalem were an *abomination*. The Romans, on account of their idols; the Zealots, on account of their crimes, and the carnage they were guilty of. Both stood in the holy place, where they "*ought not*" (Mark xiii. 14). (The Hebrew for holy place means, "*super alam*"—"above the wing," or extremity of Jerusalem and the temple, "*there shall be desolating abominations*.") Both stood at the extremity of Jerusalem and the temple; nay, in the very temple. The Zealots, who made it a citadel, and its halls, places of carnage; the Romans, by undermining, burning, consuming it, and slaughtering the Jews there like cattle, and introducing their

standards, adorned with images, of their false gods. The union of both the former interpretations in this one, will fully explain the entire passage; particularly, if we understand it, of the attack of Cœstius, which preceded that of Titus, and of the defence made against him by the Zealots. The Hebrew of the Prophet Daniel, which has "*abominations*" in the plural, would seem to refer to the abomination on the part of the Romans, and that on the part of the Jews themselves. It was in consequence "of an old tradition among the Jews, that the city would be destroyed, whenever the hands of the Jews themselves would profane their temple" (Josephus, Lib. v. c. 2), that many of the better classes among the Jews fled from Jerusalem, as from a sinking vessel, after the withdrawal of Cœstius; and relying on the same tradition, but particularly on the prophetic warning of our Lord, the Christians, and among them, St. Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem, who lived till the time of Trajan, fled to the territories of king Agrippa, and to the city of Pella in particular, beyond the Jordan.

Maldonatus understands by, "*the abomination of desolation*," or, "*the abominable or horrid desolation*," the desolation itself; and he says it was not given as a sign, by any means, of the desolation, since it could not be a sign of itself. Our Redeemer gave, as a sign, the surrounding of Jerusalem by an army. For, Maldonatus holds, that our Redeemer used both phrases, "*when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about by an army*" (Luke xxi. 20)—which was a sign of impending destruction—and, "*when you shall see the abomination of desolation*," &c. When you witness these two events, then you are to conclude, that the prophecy of Daniel, regarding the utter ruin of Jerusalem, is fulfilled. According to him, the words of this verse, "*when you see the abomination*," &c., are not connected with the words of next verse, "*then, they that are in Judea*," &c., nor is their sense any way suspensive or dependent on them. The sentence concludes fully with the words of this verse, "*he that readeth, let him understand*." The interpretation, however, which makes them dependent on the following verse, is the one more commonly adopted. Hence, the words mean: "When you shall see Jerusalem surrounded with an army," viz., of Cœstius, and immediately after, or in connexion with it, an abominable band of brigands establish themselves in the temple, or, "*the holy place*," "*where they should not*" (Mark xiii. 14). Then, "*he that reads, let him understand*," that is, whoever has sense, let him understand that the words of Daniel (ix. 27), "*and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation*," &c., are fulfilled. Some interpreters (Patrizzì, Lib. 1, cap. 1, de Ev. M., §§ 2, &c.), understand these to be the words, not of our Lord, but of the Evangelist, encouraging the faithful to understand the verification of the words of Daniel. In this interpretation, the words are parenthetical, containing an allusion to the words of Daniel (ix. 25), and the sense of the foregoing suspended until the sentence is completed in the next verse, thus: "*When you shall see*," &c., verse 15 (*he that heareth let him understand*), "*then, they that are in Judea*," &c., verse 16.

16. "*Then*," when you shall see all this happening, it shall be a signal for you to escape, with all haste, for your lives. "*Those who are in Judea*," where Jerusalem is situated. It includes all the land of Israel and Galilee, which were first destroyed by Vespasian. "*Fly to the mountains*," places difficult of access, and a safe retreat from an enemy. St. Luke (xxi. 21) adds, "*and those who are in the midst thereof depart out; and let those who are in other countries not enter into it*." Maldonatus refers, "*then*," to all the preceding signs, viz., when you shall hear of wars, &c., and see the other signs of the devastation of Jerusalem, "*then*," fly with as much speed as possible.

17. "*House-top*," is allusive to the flat roofs of the houses in Judea, where the

people used to walk, &c. The houses were provided with two staircases—one inside; the other, outside on the street. By the latter, or, as some suppose, over the flat roofs of the other houses, to the city walls, they are recommended to fly. “*Let him not come down,*” &c. Descending in the most expeditious way possible, let him make no delay, by entering the house, to take anything out of it for his approaching flight. Let him busy himself only about the most expeditious way of accomplishing his escape.

18. “*He that is in the field,*” whether walking or labouring, “*let him not go back to take his coat,*” however necessary for his journey; but, let him fly as quickly as possible, in whatever costume he may chance to be at the time. In southern countries, husbandmen, when at work, used to leave their upper garments, the cloak and coat, at home.

The words of this, and of the preceding verses, 16 and 17, are proverbial or hyperbolical forms of expression, conveying the imminent nature of the danger, and the necessity of immediate and speedy flight, as well as the magnitude of the evils that were approaching, since men should sacrifice everything sooner than encounter or endure them. Although six months elapsed between the raising of the siege, by Cœstius, and the march of Vespasian into Galilee, and a still longer period between it and the siege of Jerusalem, by Titus; still, this would be very short, when we consider the lingering delays that oftentimes embarrass those who are leaving their beloved country for ever. Hence, our Redeemer urges them to the greatest expedition and haste in their flight, on their beholding the signs He gives them of the ruin and unutterable woes that were to befall the unhappy Jerusalem.

St. Luke (xxi. 22) adds, as the cause of all this urgent admonition—“*For, these are the days of vengeance, that all things may be fulfilled, that are written,*” in the book of Daniel, and the other prophets, concerning the ruin of Jerusalem, and the vengeance to be inflicted on the Jews, for all the just blood they shed, from that of Abel downwards.

19. “*Those who are with child, or that give suck,*” cannot fly with sufficient speed; nor can they leave their charge behind, as easily as those can, who leave their money, &c., on account of the strong natural affection of a mother for her offspring. They shall be, therefore, caught and butchered by the Romans. Our Redeemer selects them, in preference to the aged and decrepit; both, because, of the happiness and ease they are wont to enjoy, and which shall now be converted into the greatest tribulation; and also to show the fearful havoc and indiscriminate slaughter that shall take place, since the pregnant and nursing women, who are ordinarily spared in war, shall meet with no mercy from the Romans. Perhaps, also, he alludes to the straits to which some unhappy mothers were to be reduced in the siege of Jerusalem, when, as we learn from Josephus, they devoured their own children, to appease hunger.

20. As in the preceding, He refers to *two classes of persons*; so here he refers to *two periods of time*, unsuited for flight. “*In winter,*” the state of the weather, and of the roads, render flight very troublesome and inconvenient. “*Or on the Sabbath,*” when the converted Jews, although the Mosaic ceremonies were then abolished, would still observe the law, regarding a Sabbath-day’s journey, and would, under no circumstances, transgress it, although, in cases of necessity, or danger of life, this did not oblige; still, some Jews did not admit even this exception. At this time, the converted Jews were *permitted*, though not *bound*, to observe the Mosaic ceremonies, and

our Redeemer here speaks in accommodation to their well-known feelings on the matter. The words of this verse mean: Pray to God, that you may escape these dreadful evils, and that nothing may obstruct your flight; and they also convey to us, by a familiar illustration, an idea of the menaced calamities, which would be such, that they should fervently pray for any circumstances that might mitigate their severity. St. Luke tells us the reason (xxi. 23), "*For, there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people.*" History fully testifies to the fearful fulfilment of this sad prediction (Josephus, de Bel. Jud., Lib. 3-7).

21. "*For there shall be great tribulation,*" &c. St. Augustine says (Epistle 8), that while it would be difficult to determine, from St. Matthew or St. Mark, whether there was reference here to the Day of Judgment or to the siege of Jerusalem, St. Luke determines it as referring to the latter, just as he clearly points out what "*the abomination of desolation*" refers to. He explains in what these dreadful evils shall consist: "*they shall fall by the edge of the sword . . . Jerusalem shall be trodden down,*" &c. (xxi. 24.) The word, "*for,*" shows it refers to the foregoing. It is assigned as a reason for their rapid flight.

"*Great tribulation, such was not from the beginning of the world, nor shall be.*" Any one who reads the account, given by Josephus, of the dreadful and almost incredible calamities which befell the unhappy Jews, in the siege of Jerusalem, may clearly see how this was fulfilled. And although, it may be, that during the persecuting reign of Antichrist, the sufferings may be more general; yet, hardly shall any fall so heavily, in point of horror and intensity, on any particular race or people, as those are said to be which were inflicted on the Jews. Moreover, the tribulation of the faithful, under Antichrist, shall not be such a tribulation of *vengeance* as that of the Jews. For, as their crime of Deicide, coupled with their obstinate resistance to grace, and their monstrous ingratitude, far exceeded the guilt of any other nation; so, was the vengeance more severe. Hence, even the punishment inflicted on Sodom, in this life, which was but a type of that inflicted on it, in the other, was not so severe as the protracted misfortunes inflicted on the Jews, in the siege of Jerusalem, which were only a feeble type of the eternal misfortunes in store for these miserable and ungrateful Deicides, who invoked the blood of the Son of God "*on themselves, and on their children.*"

22. "*Unless these days,*" employed in the siege of Jerusalem, "*had been shortened,*" and rendered fewer, than the anger of the Romans called for, and the iniquities of the Jews merited, for which no punishment, however protracted or intense, was too severe, "*no flesh,*" no person from out the Jewish nation, "*should be saved,*" from utter ruin and destruction. Had the Romans met with greater resistance and delay, and had they endured more hardships and sufferings, for any protracted time, as the natural strength and powerful fortifications of Jerusalem would give grounds to apprehend, the likelihood is, that, not only would every living soul within the precincts of Jerusalem be put to the sword; but, by a general edict, which would be carried out cheerfully by all other peoples throughout the earth, by whom the Jews were held in hatred, the Romans, then all-powerful, would decree the utter extirpation of the Jews, and abolish for ever the name of Jew, throughout the entire earth, almost all then subject to the dominion of Rome. Hence, there would be no Jews from whom "*the elect*" would be descended. The words, "*no flesh,*" refer to the Jews exclusively. From this we see, how God ordains *everything* for the good of His elect.

"*But for the sake of the elect,*" those whom God had, by His eternal decree, elected

to grace and glory among the Jews, whether these living and converted, or those to be afterwards converted, or to be born in course of time of the Jews then existing. "*But for the sake of the elect,*" lest the merciful decrees and designs of God on them should be frustrated, "*those days shall be shortened.*" St. Mark says (xiii. 20), "*But, for the sake of the elect, which He (the Lord) hath chosen, He hath shortened these days.*" In truth, such was the strength of Jerusalem, that, were it not, that the Zealots were blinded by Divine justice, to destroy the stores of provisions, which would have served for years (Josephus, Lib. 6, c. 1), and were also seized with unusual fear to abandon their strong fortifications, and weaken, by their cruel carnage and bloodshed, the strength of the city, Jerusalem might have held out for years against the Romans. Hence, Josephus (Lib. 3, c. 11), and elsewhere, attributes the success of the Romans to the interposition of God. And the same historian informs us (Lib. 7, c. 16), that Titus, on entering the stronghold of Sion, and beholding the strength of the place, declared, it was God that assisted the Romans, who could not otherwise succeed; and going round, and, seeing the ramparts filled with corpses, raising his hands, he called God to witness, that this was none of his doing. Hence, he refused a golden crown, presented to him by the neighbouring nations, stating, that not he, but God, who was angry with the Jews, was the cause of these wonderful successes (Baronius, A.D. 72, ex Philostrato).

St. Chrysostom (in Matth. 77), extols the Providence of God, who makes the three other Evangelists, who did not live till the siege of Jerusalem, the narrators of these events. St. John, who survived it, says nothing of it, in order to strengthen our faith in the predictions of our Redeemer. And, doubtless, it was with the same providential design, God employed Josephus, himself a Jew, and no Christian, to chronicle the fulfilment of these predictions, so minute in details. The words of this verse, although directly and immediately meant for the time preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, apply also to the persecution of Antichrist, who shall be allowed to "*tread under foot the holy city*" (Apoc. xi. 2), that is, the Church of Christ, "*two and forty months,*" that is, three years and a half; "*and, to make war with the saints, and to overcome them*" (Apoc. xiii. 7). His persecuting reign, which would destroy the whole human race, and would seduce almost all, shall be shortened to the above period of three and one-half years, "*for the sake of the elect.*"

23. Some commentators say, that our Redeemer here pauses to treat distinctly of the events, that are to occur after the ruin of Jerusalem, and between that period and the end of the world; and that He refers, in a particular way, to what shall take place before the end of the world, of which the ruin of Jerusalem was a type and figure. (Maldonatus, Jansenius, &c.) Others hold, that He continues to treat of the events, that are to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and of those which are to precede the Day of Judgment, indifferently—the former being a type of the latter—as far as verse 29, where He directly and specially treats of the events connected with the Day of Judgment.

It would seem, that the words of our Redeemer, as far as verse 29, apply to the time preceding the siege of Jerusalem, and may be easily explained regarding it. They can be also explained of the events that are to take place, before the final end of all things, prefigured by what preceded the ruin of Jerusalem. Hence, it could be maintained, that, in the following six verses, our Redeemer treats of both events.

"*Then,*" that is, during the wars of the Romans, preceding the siege of Jerusalem. It may also refer to the period intervening between the taking of Jerusalem and the

end of the world; and particularly to the time approaching the last end of all things; and, although thousands of years may elapse between both events, still, it may be said to have happened "*then*;" taking into account the measure of time with God, with whom "*a thousand years are as one day*" (2 Peter iii. 8); "*a thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday*," &c. (Psa. lxxxix.) And our Redeemer, when addressing the Apostles, and, through them, the faithful of all succeeding ages (for, St. John, alone, among them, lived till even the time of the destruction of Jerusalem), speaks in such a way, as to leave them uncertain as to the near approach of the Day of Judgment, thus to keep them always in readiness for its approach. Hence, although "*then*," were referred to the period of the general judgment, it could be explained as above; in the same way as the advocates of the other opinion are forced to explain the words, "*IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days*" (v. 29). But, in this verse, I would take "*then*" to refer immediately and directly to the times preceding the capture of Jerusalem, without excluding the other in a secondary and subordinate sense. "*If any man shall say to you,*" My faithful followers, who shall be alive then; for, the Apostles shall be dead, "*Lo! here is Christ,*" who is come to save and liberate His people from all their evils; "*or there, do not believe Him.*" The Jews were aware that the time of the Messiah was at hand, from the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jacob, regarding the passing of the sceptre from the tribe of Juda. Hence, some flattering Vespasian said, that he, as the conqueror of Judea, was the Messiah. (Suetonius in Vespas.) Others, flattered Herod in the same way. Each of the three leaders of the Jewish factions then at Jerusalem, Eleazar, son of Simon; John, son of Levi; and Simon, son of Gorias, gave himself out for the Messiah. So did a certain impostor, in the reign of Adrian, who wished to be called Barchochabab, *Son of the Star*, as if he were the star referred to in the words, "*orietur stella in Jacob.*"

This shall most clearly take place in the days of Antichrist also. "*Do not believe him,*" that is, do not hearken to any such false rumours, so injurious to the true Messiah, whom you believe Me to be. These are words of warning, addressed to such of the faithful as might have been slow in attending to the admonitions of our Redeemer, about leaving Judea, and might have lingered at Jerusalem, or the neighbouring places, until it would be too late to betake themselves to flight.

24. He tells them not to believe such false statements, and that such statements shall be circulated, our Redeemer assures us. "*For, there shall arise false Christs,*" men who shall pretend to be Christ, the Saviour of their people; "*and false prophets,*" who shall aid these impostors, by proclaiming among the people, as their agents and instruments of seduction, that they are the true Christ. As Christ had His true prophets to prepare the people for His coming, so shall these false Christs have their false prophets too.

"*And shall work great signs,*" &c. By the aid of magic, they shall perform great prodigies, as the seal of their mission and teaching. They shall perform these false miracles, by the aid of the demon, the father of lies, "*insomuch as to deceive,*" by their plausibility, "*(if possible) even the elect.*" By "*elect,*" are meant, those elected to final and eternal happiness. Although the "*elect*" are not impeccable, and may (as they sometimes freely do) fall away from faith and grace during life; still, considering the infallible purpose of God's decree, predestinating them to final glory, to be attained by the free exercise of good works, and the free co-operation with His efficacious graces, it is not possible, they *would* continue in sin, or die in sin. God's infallible purpose of Divine election shall so guard, guide, protect, and assist their

free will by His efficacious graces, that, though they *may be* and *are* free to sin, and to persevere in sin to the end (for "*not to be able to sin*, is not a gift of this life, but the reward of the other," says St. Augustine, (de corruptione et gratia, c. 11), still, they *will* not sin always unto the end; but, they will freely repent, if in sin, and die in God's grace and favour. Hence, the perseverance of the elect is necessary, not by an absolute necessity, or *in sensu diviso*; but, by a kind of *moral necessity*, *in sensu composito*; and, supposing the Divine decree predestinating them, *necessitate*, as logicians say, *non consequentis; sed consequentie*. None of God's elect shall perish; "*no one can snatch them out of His hand*" (John x. 28).

The words, "*to deceive (if possible) the elect*," show the magnitude of the temptation; and how it shall tell upon others. This shall be particularly true of the times of Antichrist. (2 Thess. ii. 9; Apoc. xiii. 13, &c.)

25. "*I have foretold it to you*," that is, to such of My followers as shall be then alive, in order to guard against them, and to stimulate His followers to flight, so far as the ruin of Jerusalem was in question; and by good works, to make sure their election, since, it is only on the prevision of good works is founded God's predestinating decree; and should anyone grow remiss, on account of supposing, that he was of the elect (of which no one can be absolutely certain in this life, without a revelation), such a person would give good grounds for supposing, that he is *not* of the elect. Moreover, if one were certain he was elected, this should be no reason for sinning; on the contrary, he should, by obeying God's Commandments, manifest his gratitude, and increase the treasure of merit and degree of happiness in store for him.

26. He more fully explains the words of verse 23, "*here, or there*." By mentioning two places, the most opposite—the open desert, and the inmost recesses of a house—he wishes to convey, that, no matter in what place, or in what character, any such pretender should appear, he is not to be heeded. Some say, the word, "*desert*," where this false Messiah was supposed to gather his forces, to free his people, has reference to Simon, the son of Gorias, who, after collecting immense multitudes of every class, in deserted and mountainous places, after reducing Idumea to subjection, was admitted into Jerusalem, and tyrannically oppressed the citizens. The word, "*closets*," is thought to have reference to Eleazar and John, the leaders of the Zealots, who, before the destruction of Jerusalem, successively got possession of the interior of the temple. (Josephus de Bel. Lib. vi. &c.)

27. In order to guard you against the deceitful wiles of these impostors, take this for a certain sign of My *second* coming, which alone the faithful can expect—since, they believe in My *first* coming already—it shall not be confined to any one place, or obscure locality; it shall not be, like My first coming, in humility, confined to an hidden corner of Judea, and the obscurity of night; but, like the lightning of heaven, which at once appears brilliant, effulgent, and dazzling, at the same moment, in the opposite parts of the heavens; so shall My coming be sudden, glorious, and seen from afar, visible to the entire earth, dazzling all mankind by its splendour and brilliancy, when it shall make itself known, not merely in one part of the earth, but throughout the vast expanse of the heavens, so that it shall convince the world at once, of the truth of My appearance. Whosoever, therefore, shall appear in any one place, or corner, and pretend to be the Messiah, is convicted, from this sign, of being an impostor. Perhaps, these words are also intended to correct the carnal notions,

which the Apostles formed of the glorious coming of our Redeemer, whose kingdom, they imagined, would commence in Judea. Our Redeemer, on the contrary, conveys to them, that it would be heavenly, and all celestial, different altogether from what they imagined it would be.

28. The words of this verse are supposed by many to be allusive to the passage of (Job xxxix. 30), where, treating of the eagle, God says, "*wheresoever the carcass shall be, she is immediately there.*" By some the words are supposed to be a Hebrew proverb, conveying, that no very great exertion or labour is needed for uniting those that are naturally united, and have a natural and irresistible tendency towards each other. He compares Himself to the carcass (the Greek for body is, *πτομα*, a dead body), on account of His death, endured for our sakes, to procure glory for us, like that of His own glorified body. He compares His elect to "*eagles*," because, as the eagle, this noble and royal bird, harmlessly escapes the lightning, so shall the elect escape unhurt, and stand in great constancy amidst the woes and lightnings of the last day. Moreover, as the eagles scent from an incredible distance, a dead body, and are carried aloft through space in quest of it, so, shall the elect be borne aloft in the air to meet Christ (1 Thess. iv. 16), the great centre of attraction. To this St. Luke alludes (xvii. 36).

The words of this verse would seem to be an answer to an implied complaint which might arise in the minds of His Apostles, viz., if Thy reign be thus brilliant, heavenly and passing, like the lightning, how can we enjoy it? He says, that His elect shall be permanently gathered to Him, so as to remain with Him, to enjoy Him. As the eagle, which is instinctively attracted to a carcass, floats aloft in air, crossing seas to enjoy it; so, shall they, after the resurrection from the tomb, renovated in youth like the eagle, be drawn to Him to enjoy Him, to feast with Him, and continue with Him for ever. The words, according to the Greek, *ὅπου γὰρ το πτομα*, &c., "*for, where the body is*," &c., may be also regarded as illustrative, in a certain sense, of the preceding. They are a proverbial form of expression, showing, that a thing cannot be concealed. For, as the eagles scent their prey from afar, and make towards it; so, My glorious coming into the world shall not be hidden, but known to all. Wherefore, the faithful, like eagles of acutest sense, shall perceive My Divine presence, shall be attracted towards Me, and refreshed by My glory for ever. Hence, then, there shall be no need to inquire where is Christ; since, His coming shall be conspicuous and known to the entire world. Our Lord compares His *elect* to "*eagles*;" because, the *reprobate* shall not be borne aloft to meet the Judge, nor attracted to Him. They shall be reluctantly forced to appear at judgment.

St. Hilary infers from this verse, that our Redeemer will judge mankind in the place where His sacred body was raised on the cross, buried, and rose again. Thither shall all mankind proceed to be judged, near Jerusalem, in the valley of Josaphat, as the Prophet Joel teaches (Joel iii. 2).

TEXT.

29. *And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved:*

30. *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty.*

31. *And he shall send his Angels with a trumpet, and a great voice : and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them.*

32. *And from the fig-tree learn a parable : when the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh.*

33. *So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh even at the doors.*

34. *Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.*

35. *Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but my words shall not pass away.*

COMMENTARY.

29. "*Immediately after the tribulation of these days.*" This refers, according to those who hold, that in the preceding verses our Redeemer is treating of the time preceding the end of the world, to the persecutions by "*false Christs and false prophets,*" especially Antichrist. According even to those, who hold, that in the preceding, He is treating of the incredible woes, that, from several sources, are to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, the word, "*immediately,*" is to be explained in the sense given already to "*then,*" in verse 23, that the interval between the taking of Jerusalem and the end of the world, of which there is question in this verse, however long, in a human point of view, and according to human calculations, is, according to God's view and measure, but an instant. (2 Peter iii. 8 ; Psa. lxxxix). Hence, in the New Testament, the whole term of the New Law is termed, "*the last hour.*" St. Peter says, the end of all "*is at hand*" (1 Ep. iv. 7). Even in human calculations it is very short for each individual, since it virtually takes place for each one at death, when his eternal doom is sealed. Moreover, by "*immediately,*" our Redeemer means to convey, that no other remarkable change in religion, which would concern the faithful, is to occur between the ruin of Jerusalem and the end of all things. Hence, in the early ages, many imagined the Day of Judgment to be at hand, which forced St. Paul to correct this error. (2 Thess. ii. &c.)

"*The sun shall be darkened,*" &c. This shall occur *before* the coming of the Judge (Luke xxi. 25-27 ; Joel ii. 21). Many understand these words, in a metaphorical and spiritual sense, to refer to the Church and her condition, to the events that shall take place in her, and the persecutions she shall endure, at the end of the world. But, by comparing St. Luke (xxi. 25-27) with St. Matthew, it is quite clear, the words are to be understood *literally*, of the physical and stupendous phenomena, which shall take place both in the *skies* and on the *earth*, previous to the glorious coming of Christ to judgment. The sun shall withhold its light, as happened at the death of Christ. It shall become "*black as sackcloth of hair*" (Apoc. xi. 12). As its first light pointed out a newly created world ; so, shall its darkness indicate the final end of the same. "*The signs in the sun and the moon and the stars*" (Luke xxi. 25), are what is here referred to by St. Matthew, about the darkening of the sun, &c. "*The moon shall not give her light.*" She shall have none to give, on account of the darkness of the sun, from which she borrows her light ; "*she shall be as blood*" (Apoc. vi. 12).

"*The stars shall fall from heaven ;*" that is, they shall be so obscured from the sight of men, that they would seem to fall from heaven (Isaias xiii. 10). Besides, this may be understood *literally* ; because comets and other stars generated in the air shall fall (Joel ii. 30 ; Apoc. vi. 13). St. Augustine (de Civit. Dei, c. 24), says : "*Ignited exhalations, like to stars, shall be discharged from sky to earth, more wonderfully than happens now.*"

"*And the powers of heaven shall be moved.*" By these, are commonly understood,

the heavenly bodies or stars, which are frequently termed in SS. Scripture, "*militia cæli, the army or host of heaven.*" (Deut. xvii. 3; 4 Kings xvii. 16; xxi. 3-5; Isa. xxiv. 21, &c.; Jer. viii. 2, &c.) These "*shall be moved,*" from their place, and shall cease to perform their usual courses and functions, of giving light, heat, &c. According to this class of interpreters, these words express, in a *general* way, what is expressed in a *particular* way, in the preceding words, "*the sun shall be darkened, the moon refuse her light,*" &c. The same idea is repeated in this verse, in a general way, for greater emphasis' sake. On seeing these different signs and changes, which *shall precede* the coming of the Judge, men shall be seized with fear and consternation, at the prospect of the evils that are about to fall upon the world. Others, by "*the moving of the powers of heaven,*" understand, an extraordinary movement and agitation of the entire machine of the heavens, a shaking of their very foundations and hinges, as it were, which, by their disorderly movement, shall exhibit symptoms of an expiring world. It is the idea conveyed by Job, when he says, "*the pillars of heaven tremble at His nod*" (Job xxvi. 11). These "*powers*" are called "*the poles of the world*" (Prov. viii. 26). The same idea is conveyed by St. Peter (2 Peter iii. 10), "*the heavens shall pass away with great violence.*" Estius understands, by the "*moving of the powers of the heavens,*" the ceasing of the heavens to exert any influence on the earth, so that on the earth, and in the condition of the seasons, we shall witness the most strange changes; we shall see the summer, cold; and the winter, hot. The signs in the heavens shall be accompanied with corresponding signs in the sea, on the earth, and in the elements—all calculated to inspire men with dread and terror. The opinion, which understands, by "*powers,*" the Angels, meaning the same as the words, *cæli colorumque virtutes*, is now commonly rejected as utterly improbable.

30. "*And then,*" immediately after the preceding signs. "*The sign of the Son of man.*" The most commonly received interpretation, understands this of the cross of our Redeemer, which alone could be termed, "*the sign*" (τὸ σημεῖον), His certain, well-known standard, whereby He achieved the victory over death and hell, and merited glory for Himself and us. Hence, the Church chaunts, in the Office of the Holy Cross, "*hoc signum crucis erit in cælo, cum Dominus ad judicandum venerit.*" It was by the cross He was known, and rendered celebrated throughout the world. This standard of the cross shall be borne aloft by angels before the Judge descending to pass judgment, as a trophy of victory, as the royal ensign of power and authority. Thus shall it be shown, that by His cross, Christ merited glory and judiciary power, that those are ungrateful and inexcusable, who spurned the charity which He displayed when He submitted to be crucified for the salvation of all; now, the humble followers of the cross shall be seated with Him; and its enemies hurled to the abyss of hell. Whether the *real cross*, on which Christ died, shall appear, after its several parts have been collected and united by the power of God; or, merely an image or resplendent figure of it, formed in the air, is disputed. The latter opinion seems, to some, the more likely, as thus we shall avoid the useless multiplication of miracles, in the collection of the scattered particles of the wood of the true cross. Besides, the word, "*sign,*" favours this latter view. Some commentators hold the opinion, which, however, does not exceed the bounds of probability, as the SS. Scripture and the Church are silent upon it, that the other instruments of our Saviour's Passion—the nails, the scourges, the thorns, &c., shall also appear with the cross on that day, shining resplendent in the heavens.

"*And then shall all the tribes,*" that is, all the impious and infidels, who refused to receive our Lord, or obey His Commandments, and the Jews particularly, of whom it

is said, "*videbunt in quem transfixerunt*" (John xix. 37). The elect cannot be referred to. Far from mourning, those who conformed their lives to the model of Christ suffering on the cross, shall be filled with ineffable joy and consolation. "*They shall, then, stand in great constancy,*" viz., the just, "*who love His coming*" (1 Tim. iv. 8). When, then, it is said, "*all the tribes of the earth shall mourn,*" there is an example of what logicians term, *distributio pro generibus singulorum*, and not *pro singulis generum*. The Greek word for "mourn" (*κοιπονται*), conveys the idea of striking their breasts. The words of this verse are allusive to Zacharias (xii.), as appears from Apocalypse (i. 7). The passage from Zacharias, most likely, referred to the wailing of the faithful Jews over the death of Christ, to which their sins gave occasion, according to St. Jerome. Still, it is, by accommodation, applied by our Redeemer to the unavailing wailings of the infidels, on beholding Christ, whom they slew and rejected; just as the words which St. John (xix. 37), quotes from Zacharias (xii. 10), "*and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced,*" although originally referring to the faithful Jews, who were to regard our Redeemer in a spirit of faith, and upon whom was poured out "*the spirit of grace and of prayer*" (Zacharias xii. 10), are, by accommodation, applied to the unbelieving Jews, who shall, on the last day, behold Him exhibiting His wounds; so, that having before refused voluntarily to believe in Him and bewail His death, they shall then be forced to look on Him involuntarily, and indulge in unavailing regrets.

"*And they shall see,*" immediately after the preceding signs, "*the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven.*" These words are allusive to Daniel (vii. 13), "*ecce in nubibus quasi filius hominis veniebat.*" After our Lord had ascended, and had been taken up by the Angels in a cloud into heaven, it was said by them, "*sic veniet, quemadmodum vidistis eum,*" &c. (Acts i. 11.) He shall come now, a second time, clothed with human nature, not, however, retaining its mortality or infirmities; but, "*in the clouds of heaven,*" which shall symbolize His glory, by their brightness, and serve as a triumphal car, on which He shall appear seated. No longer shall He appear in lowliness, or poverty, or debasement, as at His first coming; but, "*with much power and majesty.*" The Greek is, with "*much power and glory.*" His power will be seen from the resurrection of all the dead, at His sole word of command; from their suddenly assembling in one place; from His irrevocably passing sentence on all, according to their deserts; from His receiving the homage of every creature, in heaven, earth, and hell, including angels, men, and devils, who shall acknowledge Him as their Lord and Judge. His "*glory,*" or "*majesty,*" shall appear from the glorious brightness of His body; from the hosts of Angels accompanying Him, and heralding in His approach; from His appearing seated on the clouds of heaven; and from the sounds of trumpets; from the thunders, lightning, and earthquakes which shall precede His coming (Apoc. vi. 15, 16).

31. "*Send His Angels,*" &c. Similar is the description (1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16). He says, "*His Angels,*" to convey, that He is their Lord and Master; they, His messengers.

"*With a trumpet and a great voice.*" Whether this shall be a real trumpet or not is disputed. The most commonly received opinion is, that it refers to a noise, louder than thunder, which, by the instrumentality of Michael and the other Angels, the Son of God shall cause to reverberate throughout creation. Its effect shall be, to rouse the dead from their long slumber, owing to the efficacious power of God. The word, "*and,*" means, that is, "*a great voice,*" the latter words being explanatory of the former. In the Greek it is, "*with a trumpet of great*

voice." What words shall be uttered by it, is uncertain. It is commonly supposed, that it shall distinctly announce the words, "*Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment,*" or the words, "*Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him*" (xxv. 6.). Others suppose the passage to simply mean, that by the efficacious power and will of God, the dead shall rise from their tombs, and be awakened from their long sleep, as those who are asleep are roused by the noise of a loud trumpet. The former is most likely. This trumpet, which shall proclaim the descent of the Son of God to final judgment, had been prefigured in the Old Testament; in the first place, by that which proclaimed the majesty of God when promulgating His law on Mount Sinai; again, by the trumpets with which the people were wont to be summoned by the Priests to the Tabernacle of the Covenant. (Num. x., &c.) The sound of trumpets is usually employed to usher in the approach of kings and great princes. The metaphor is borrowed from war, where a trumpet is employed to gather the soldiers, and terrify the enemy; here, it is conveyed, that the sound of trumpets shall be employed to announce the approach and majesty of the Sovereign Judge, to gather the human race, and inspire the enemies of God with terror and alarm.

"*And they shall gather together His elect from the four winds,*" that is, from the four quarters of the earth, east, west, north, and south, the principal points from which the winds blow. The words, "*from the four winds,*" are a Hebrew form, denoting, all quarters of the globe. The "*winds,*" according to the Hebrew notions, denoted not only the cardinal points of the heavens; but, they also marked the regions, in the direction from which any of them blew.

"*From the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost boundaries,*" &c. The Greek word for "*farthest parts,*" and "*utmost boundaries,*" is the same, ἀκρων; ἀπ' ἄκρων οὐρανὸν ἕως ἄκρων, &c. It denotes, from the utmost part of the earth, to the utmost part of heaven (ἀπ' ἄκρον γῆς ἕως ἀκρον οὐρανὸν), as St. Mark has it (xiii. 27). The phrase is but a fuller and more explanatory repetition of the preceding. It signifies, the extreme points of the heavens farthest asunder, such as east and west, right and left, including all the intermediate space—not so fully expressed in the preceding words—where the *earth* and *sky* would seem to meet. From all parts under heaven shall the elect be gathered; not carried by Angels, as was the Prophet Habacuc (Dan. xiv. 35); but, in virtue of the glorious gift of *agility*, they shall be, at once, transported into the air to meet the Judge. Similar are the phrases (Deut. iv. 32), "*From one end of heaven to the other end thereof.*" Also in the Psalm (xviii. 7), "*His going out is from the end of heaven; and His circuit even unto the end thereof,*" that is, from the extreme east to the extreme point of the west. The reprobate, being devoid of this gift of *agility*, shall be carried by Angels, like Habacuc. "*And He shall send His Angels, and they shall gather all scandals from His kingdom.*" But, having addressed Himself to His disciples, in order to console them. He makes mention only of "*the elect.*" Some commentators think the words contain an allusion to the souls of the just, which shall be transferred from the highest heavens, to reanimate their resuscitated bodies, and shall proceed to the place of judgment. The former interpretation is, however, the more probable, as it accords better with the words of St. Mark, and the allusion to "*the four winds.*"

32. "*And from the fig-tree learn a parable.*" "*Parable,*" here means, an illustration. The fig-tree was very common in Judea; and hence, any allusion to it, or illustration borrowed from it, was quite intelligible. Whenever it put forth its leaves, it was a sign that summer was nigh. This is accounted for on physical grounds, and is known from experience. St. Luke (xxi. 30), says, "*when they now shoot forth their*

fruit." But, by "*fruit*," he means, the young shoots and leaves, the same as is here expressed by St. Matthew.

33. "*Know that it is nigh even at the doors.*" What "*it*" refers to, what it is that is, "*at their doors*," would not be so clear were it not that St. Luke clearly expresses it. It is, their redemption, their perfect exemption from all evils and fears, when in the full enjoyment of God's glorious and heavenly "*kingdom*" (Luke xxi. 28-31). "*It*" does not refer to the coming of the Son of man. For, among "*all these things*," already described, "*the sign of the Son of man appearing in heaven*," is mentioned. Hence, it refers to the near or immediate approach of their redemption, when, after the reprobate shall be in great terror and alarm, and shall weep, His elect may "*look up and lift up their heads*" (Luke xxi. 28), at the prospect of hearing the consoling invitation, to "*come and take possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world*," which is to succeed these precursory signs, already described. This is the perfect redemption of the glorified sons of God, after which inanimate creation itself sighs and groans, like a mother longing to be delivered from the painful throes of childbirth (Rom. viii. 19-22).

34. "*Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass*," &c. What, "*this generation*," refers to, is not easily seen. Some understand by it, with St. Jerome, the human race, and particularly, the Jewish people, whom our Redeemer frequently calls, "*this generation*" (Luke xvii. 25; Matt. xxiii. 36). And our Redeemer's object would be, if we limit the word to the Jewish people, to convey, that while other nations and tribes and peoples would pass away, before the Day of Judgment, without a vestige of them being left, the Jewish people would be preserved, as a testimony of their foolish expectation of their Messiah, according to the false conceptions they had regarding Him; and also, as an argument of God's mercy, in calling them at the end of the world, to the faith, by sending one "*from Sion, who would turn away iniquity from Jacob*" (Rom. xi. 26). His object in saying it, if we understand the words of the human race, would be, to assure us, that the world would not end till all these things would happen, so certain was His assertion; and this is conveyed in words of the following verse: "*Heaven and earth shall pass away*," &c. Others, with St. Chrysostom, understood, "*this generation*," of the new generation of faithful believers, begotten by Christ; as if He said: that, no matter what evils would arise, what persecutions it had to encounter, the Christian religion would continue for ever to flourish on earth, until the Church *militant* would exchange her state for that of the Church *triumphant*. Others say, that it refers to the generation of men whom He was addressing; and, then, these give "*all these things*" a restricted meaning. As in the preceding, our Redeemer had been referring to the precursory signs and accompanying events, both of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Day of Judgment—the former being a type and figure of the latter—these expositors confine "*all these things*" to the signs and events relating to the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened, before all the generation He then addressed, had passed away, that is, they happened in the lifetime of some of them. The chief objection to this interpretation is, that it restricts, without any seeming justification, the words, "*all these things*," to only a part of the things referred to, viz., those relating to the destruction of Jerusalem. It might, perhaps, be said, that as the signs and events relating to the destruction of Jerusalem, were types of those which shall precede, and take place on, the Day of Judgment, all shall take place on the former occasion, viz., the events relating to Jerusalem, literally; and those having reference to the Day of Judgment, *typically*, during

the lifetime of some men, who were living at the time our Redeemer uttered those words.

Others, by generation (*γενεαν*) understand *age*, or *period of time*, thereby meaning, the period of time which was to elapse between Christ's *first* and *second* coming, which is termed the last age of the world, and hence, termed by St. John, "*the last hour*," and by St. Paul, "*the ends of the world*" (1 Cor. x. 11), being the last period of time within which any remarkable change in religion shall take place, until the end of all shall arrive. Hence, the words may mean, all these things shall happen, before the final end of this age on which we have entered shall have arrived. The coming of the Son of man shall put an end to the age on which we have entered. No other remarkable religious change shall take place until His final coming.

35. "*Heaven and earth shall pass away*" as to their present external form, "*transit figura hujus mundi*" (1 Cor. vii. 31); but, not as to substance; for, they shall be transformed into a "*new heaven and a new earth*." "*But My words shall not pass*," without being fully accomplished. The words may also mean, sooner shall the heavens—which, "*He hath established for ever, and for ages of ages*" (Psa. cxlviii. 6)—and the earth, "*which standeth for ever*" (Eccles. i. 4); sooner shall these things, which the Scripture itself describes as eternal and immoveable, pass away, than My words be unaccomplished. This meaning is fully warranted by the words of St. Luke (xvi. 17), "*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail*."

TEXT.

36. *But of that day and hour no one knoweth, no not the Angels of heaven, but the Father alone.*

37. *And as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

38. *For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark,*

39. *And they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away: so also shall the coming of the Son of man be.*

40. *Then two shall be in the field: one shall be taken, and one shall be left.*

41. *Two women shall be grinding at the mill: one shall be taken, and one shall be left.*

42. *Watch ye, therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come.*

43. *But this know ye, that if the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open.*

44. *Wherefore be ye also ready, because at what hour you know not, the Son of man will come.*

COMMENTARY.

36. He says, "*of that day and hour*," meaning, thereby, a defined fixed period—rather than, "*of that year, month, or age*;" because, from the foregoing premonitory signs, men could know the year or period of the year, within which it would take place, just as no one knows the precise day or hour of his death, although, from certain premonitory symptoms, it could be easily seen within what time he would die. Having given the general signs of His coming, as far as was expedient to be made known to us, our Redeemer, in order to repress any further undue curiosity, which might be inconsistent with that state of uncertainty regarding our future condition in which His providence desires us all to be kept, tells His Apostles, that no being on earth or heaven, except God, knows the precise moment or hour of His coming. Hence, His

Apostles should not take it amiss, if that was not communicated to them, which was hidden from the very Angels of heaven. In St. Mark (xiii. 32), it is said, "*neither the Angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father knows of that hour or day,*" the meaning of which, as regards "*the Son,*" is, that although Christ had the fulness of all knowledge as God; and all knowledge was communicated to Him as man, at the Incarnation; for, "*all things were delivered to Him by the Father*" (xi. 27), still, He did not know the hour nor the day of the end of all things, as *Legate sent by God*, so as to communicate the knowledge of it to others. Christ knew it, for whenever any *essential* attribute is attributed to any Person of the Trinity, creatures alone are excluded; that is to say, those alone are excluded who possess not the same nature. It is different when there is question of what are termed *Notional Attributes*, such as, *begetting* and *being begotten*, each peculiar to the Persons of the Trinity. But, as creation and the knowledge of it, although, as an act of Providence, by appropriation, attributed to the Father, is still common to the Blessed Trinity; so also is the destruction of the world, and the knowledge regarding it common to the Trinity. However, Christ knows it not as *Legate*; because, *in virtue of His office*, He is not to communicate it to us. Just as St. Paul, who discovered wisdom among the perfect, still, among the Corinthians, "*knew only Christ, and Him crucified,*" this being the only knowledge He deemed fit to communicate to them. In a similar sense, He says of the sons of Zebodee (xx. 23): "*It is not Mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father.*" But that He had the full knowledge of all things, we know. For, "*in Him were concealed all the treasures of knowledge, and of wisdom*" (Col. ii. 3). God has wisely concealed this from us, in order to keep us always prepared, while daily expecting His coming. And our Redeemer represses any undue feeling of curiosity regarding further or more precise knowledge, by telling them, that no created being, either in heaven, or on earth, can know anything more definite. Nay, that He Himself did not know it as *Legate*, so as to communicate it to others.

37. "*As it was in the days of Noc, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.*" As the deluge came suddenly upon an incredulous world, wholly unprepared for it, and unconsciously and listlessly involved in the pursuit of pleasure, and their ordinary worldly business; so, shall the coming of the Son of man find worldlings indulging in good cheer, in pleasure, and engrossed in their ordinary worldly business.

St. Luke (xvii. 28) introduces the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot, as a further illustration

38. "*Eating and drinking.*" It may be, He taxes them with excessive indulgence in these things. "*Marrying and giving*"—their daughters—"in marriage." Most likely, our Redeemer does not here charge them with the crimes which provoked the fearful chastisement of the Deluge. The foregoing words are merely intended to show the supine security they enjoyed, their state of unconcern, and absorption in worldly business, and indulgence in pleasure, while on the eve of dreadful destruction.

39. "*And they knew not,*" that is, although Noc, the preacher of justice, had warned them of their impending danger; still, "*they knew not,*" they did not care to know; they culpably and incredulously closed their ears and eyes against all they saw and heard.

"*Till the flood came and swept them all away,*" destroying every living creature under heaven, save Noe, and those that were with him in the ark.

"*So shall the coming of the Son of man be,*" sudden and unexpected. This has

reference to the wicked and unbelieving, as it is to them alone, the above allusion to the Deluge also applies. This is clearly expressed by St. Paul (1 Thess. v), where, referring to the sudden approach of the day of the Lord, he tells us, "*The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night. For, when they shall say, peace and security; then shall sudden destruction come upon them,*" &c.

A question here naturally presents itself: How could men indulge in pleasures in the midst of the evils, wars, pestilences, earthquakes, &c., and the several other phenomena, such as the darkening of the sun, the roaring of the sea, &c., that shall precede the final end of all things, the consideration of which shall make men "*with away for fear?*" &c. (Luke xxi. 26.) The reply generally given is, that after the wars of Antichrist and the other evils, which shall take place in his time, a respite and, as it were, a short period of peace and rest, shall be given to the earth, as is supposed by St. Jerome. During that period, the wicked shall proceed with their ordinary temporal occupations, and indulge in their ordinary pleasures in perfect and fancied security; and then the immediate premonitory signs, through which commences the destruction of the earth, shall suddenly come upon them. Besides, even during the persecuting reign of Antichrist, the wicked shall prosper in the ruin and destruction of the good; while the latter shall be in sorrow, the former shall rejoice. On them, the destruction of the world shall come unexpectedly. "*The coming of the Son of man,*" involves the precursory signs that are immediately to usher in the final destruction of all things.

40, 41. "*Then, two shall be in the field,*" &c. As St. Matthew refers to the coming of our Lord in the *day* time, he instances classes of persons placed in circumstances suited to the day time, such as labouring in the field, and grinding at the mill. And as St. Luke (xvii. 34), refers to the event as happening in the night time; so, he instances circumstances suited to night, such as sleeping in bed, and working at the mill—the ordinary occupation of female slaves (Exod. xi. 5)—at night, as well as in day time. Our Redeemer wishes to convey, that His coming shall be not only sudden and unexpected; but, that it shall make an eternal separation between the good and the bad, out of every order, whether slave or free, even from amongst those who are most intimately connected. Of these on the day of Christ's coming, "*one shall be taken,*" and carried to meet the Judge in the air; "*the other shall be left,*" for reprobation, to be the prey of demons, and eternal fire. Others, give these words an opposite signification, to mean, "*one shall be taken*" by the demons for destruction and reprobation, on account of his wicked life; *the other shall be spared, left unhurt*, in reward for his good works and holy life. It is difficult to determine which is the true meaning. Mauduit has a short dissertation on the words of St. Luke (xvii. 37): "*Whosoever the body shall be, thither will the eagles also be gathered together,*" which he interprets in a sense quite the reverse of the common one, according to which, the words are understood as having reference to the elect ("*the eagles*") gathered, or rather attracted, to meet Christ, whose glorious body shall, on that day, bear the marks of the wounds inflicted on Him for our sakes. In the dissertation referred to, Mauduit adopts the latter interpretation of the words, "*left, and taken.*" "*Left,*" safe, unhurt, according to him; "*taken,*" destroyed, become the prey of merciless demons, which are represented in SS. Scripture as "*birds of prey,*" that come down to destroy the good seed planted in the heart of man; and the eagles or vultures viewed as birds of prey, aptly represent the unclean spirits, who dwell in the air, whence they descend to wage their fiendish war with mankind.

But, at what precise time, the circumstances here referred to by our Redeemer, shall

take place, is not easily seen, particularly as all men shall have been dead at the time our Redeemer will make His appearance. And, even admitting that some might survive till the very Day of Judgment, it is not easy to see how they can be unconcerned, either in the field, or in bed, or at the mill, after the fearful precursory signs that shall usher in the Day of Judgment. The most probable answer is, that our Redeemer refers to the time that shall precede the signs which immediately usher in the Day of Judgment, as if He said, the darkening of the sun, and the other horrible appearances, shall come on you unexpectedly. "*On that night,*" or darksome time, "*two shall be in one bed : the one shall be taken,*" &c. (Luke xvii. 34.) Some commentators, with Cajetan, say, that the men of those days shall pay no heed to the signs of coming judgment, and, like the men in the days of Noe, will attend to their ordinary concerns, and not do penance. But this is not very likely, as regards Christians; and, moreover, the precursory signs shall inspire men with such terror—"men withering away for fear"—that it would be impossible for them to attend to their ordinary occupations in life. (Luke xxi. 26.)

St. Augustine understands the words in a spiritual sense, as referring to the different classes of men. Those "*in one bed*" (Luke xvii. 34), refer to men free from all concern. Those "*grinding at the mill,*" to those actively engaged in worldly business. Those "*in the field,*" to the prelates of the Church, labouring in the field of the Lord.

This entire discourse of our Redeemer has for object, to inspire His Apostles, and all His followers, with sentiments of humility and salutary fear, arising from the terrible and mysterious separation He shall make; and of vigilance, owing to the uncertainty of the time of His coming. The words of these verses convey to us, that from every position in life, from the highest to the lowest, this dreadful and mysterious selection shall be made.

In the interpretation of those commentators, who understand the foregoing of the coming of our Lord to preach the Gospel, the words are quite intelligible; at the preaching of the New Law, some will embrace it, others reject it. "*One will be taken*" to embrace the Gospel, others left and reprobated from the same (Pere Lallémont).

42. This is the conclusion which our Redeemer derives from the foregoing; and in it is insinuated, that His reason for leaving us in a state of uncertainty, in regard to the time of His coming, is, in order to keep us always vigilant in expectation of it. He illustrates this in the following example. St. Mark (xiii. 33, &c.), adds, "*and pray ye,*" in order to show us, that our vigilance and personal exertions, of themselves, shall avail nothing; they must be sustained by God's grace and providence. St. Luke, after warning men against the obstacles to vigilance (xxi. 34), adds, "*praying at all times*" (v. 36). St. Augustine (Epist. 80) observes, that these words apply to all men, even those who shall have died before the Day of Judgment; because, the Son of God comes at death, when the Day of Judgment virtually takes place for each one. For, the condition of all, on the last day, shall depend on the state they may be found in at death, "*quod in die Judicii futurum est omnibus, hoc in singulis, die mortis impletur*" (St. Jerome).

"*Because you know not at what hour,*" &c., contains an allusion to the conduct of servants, who are always on the watch for the arrival of their master, about the time of whose coming they may be uncertain. The sentence, in order to convey its meaning accurately, should be arranged as follows: "*Because, therefore, you know not . . . watch.*" Our Redeemer does not speak of bodily watching, but of mental

vigilance, ever keeping the coming of the Lord in mind, and acting accordingly, which is conveyed in verse 44. "*Be ready*," or prepared, on that day, by being in a state in which we would wish the Lord to find us, viz., a state of grace.

43. This illustration shows the vigilance we should employ, while expecting the coming of our Lord. In it, our Redeemer, at the same time, conveys a tacit censure on the indifference of men, in regard to the paramount concern of eternal salvation compared with their vigilant care and solicitude, when there is question of temporal and passing interests.

"*At what hour.*" The Greek, φυλακή, means, *watch*, or, *hour of the night*, in allusion to the military divisions of the night, into *four watches*, or principal hours, for relieving guard (Luke xii. 38). In this verse, our Redeemer compares the unexpected suddenness of His approach to that of a thief breaking into the house of one off his guard.

By "*thief*," some understand, the devil, who always endeavours to break into our house, that is, our bodies. By his wicked inspirations, and criminal pleasures, he desires to deprive them of the costly and precious ornaments of sanctifying grace.

St. Mark (xiii. 35), expresses this more circumstantially. "*Watch ye, therefore, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning,*" which may be understood, of the several stages of man's life. In several passages of SS. Scripture, the coming of our Lord is compared to the unexpected approach of the midnight thief. (Luke xii. 39; 1 Thess. v. 4; 2 Peter iii. 10, &c.)

In the Greek, instead of, "*he knew*," "*would watch*," "*would not suffer*," it is in the past, "*if he had known*," "*would have watched*," "*would not have suffered*," according to which reading, the example proposed refers to a householder, who, for want of due vigilance, had actually been robbed, and his house broken into, by the nightly robber, whose slothful example, therefore, we should be careful not to imitate; but, rather, be always on the watch, for fear of incurring the like misfortune, in reference to our eternal salvation.

44. "*Therefore.*" In order to complete the connexion of this with the preceding verse, and see the force of our Redeemer's conclusion, the following sentence, which is implied, must be expressed: "But because no householder can know the precise time of the robber's stealthy approach, he must, therefore, be always on the watch, if he wish to guard his house." Therefore, as your condition of uncertainty is somewhat similar to that of the householder referred to, as regards "*the coming of the Son of man*," you must be always ready, if you wish to secure the salvation of your souls, and escape the ruin symbolized by that of the householder in question.

TEXT.

45. *Who thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season?*

46. *Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come he shall find so doing.*

47. *Amen I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods.*

48. *But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My lord is long a coming:*

49. *And shall begin to strike his fellow-servants, and shall eat, and drink with drunkards:*

50. *The lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not, and at an hour that he knoweth not.*

51. *And shall separate him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

COMMENTARY.

45. "*Who thinkest thou,*" &c. The order of the sentence should be this: "What servant, whom his lord hath set over his family, to give them meat, in due season, is faithful and wise?" This question was asked, on the occasion of St. Peter questioning our Redeemer (Luke xii. 40), if the foregoing parable, regarding vigilance, was intended for the Apostles, as well as for the rest of the faithful. For, it would seem, the Apostles fancied they had privileges and exemptions, which would not permit certain things, addressed to the multitude, to apply to them.

Our Redeemer's reply, which is put in an interrogative form, for greater emphasis' sake, corrects this error and conveys, that, as regards the Apostles, and all placed in charge of others, they have need of greater vigilance still, than others, and of greater prudence and fidelity, in the interests of their master; this interrogative form, as St. Chrysostom remarks, conveys, that such faithful servants are very rarely met with. Those placed in charge of others, should bear in mind, that they are "*servants*" of another, and not themselves masters. "*Faithful,*" so as not to deceive; "*prudent,*" so as not to be deceived. "*Faithful,*" in seeking the interests of their master, and the good of their fellow-servants, not their own; "*prudent,*" in employing the most efficacious means for this end. "*Faithful,*" in not refusing their fellow-servants their due measure of food; "*prudent,*" in distributing it properly, according to each one's wants and requirements. "*Faithful,*" in not converting to their own use, what belongs to their fellow-servants; "*prudent,*" in disposing of these means in due time.

Both qualities are absolutely required in those placed in authority, especially in those charged with the spiritual care of souls. Without "*prudence,*" "*fidelity*" may prove injurious; and without "*fidelity,*" "*prudence*" would degenerate into cunning selfishness. Hence, they should unite the cunning of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. This applies, as St. Chrysostom remarks, to temporal rulers also. It applies to the rich of this world, no less than to the doctors and pastors of the Church. To both is confided the stewardship of treasures of different kinds, which they should dispense with fidelity and prudence. And, as if to remind them, that they are mere stewards (Luke xii. 42), our Lord calls the servant in question, "*a steward.*"

"*Meat in season,*" which is expressed by St. Luke (xii. 42), "*measure of wheat in due season,*" is allusive to the custom among masters, of appointing a head slave, or steward, to give out monthly rations, the allotted portions of food, to their fellow-slaves.

In the foregoing, our Redeemer refers, not to the prudence of the flesh, which is death; but, to the prudence of the Spirit, which is life (Rom. viii. 6).

46, 47. He pronounces, "*Blessed,*" that servant whom, at His coming, He shall find persevering in the faithful and prudent discharge of the stewardship confided to him. He is "*blessed,*" because, his master will not only place him over his fellow-servants, but, "*over all his goods,*" as if to share with him His own supreme power, dominion, and happiness, and make him a partner and associate, as Pharaoh did in regard to the faithful Joseph. These latter words convey the idea, of the

sovereign felicity and happiness of the saints, and their never-ending remuneration in glory. They point out the more abundant honour and glory, which Christ will bestow on His faithful ministers, beyond the rest of the elect, when returning to judge the world, He shall make them His assessors, in judging the rest of mankind.

48. Having pointed out the office and rewards of the good steward, our Redeemer proceeds to describe the vices and punishment of the faithless and wicked servant. He particularizes two leading vices, viz., the oppression of his fellow-servants, given in charge to him; and the abuse of his master's goods, in extravagance and in the indulgence of illicit pleasures. Against these vices, St. Peter cautions the prelates of the Church (1 Pet. v. 2).

"*If that evil servant,*" that is, that servant whom his master shall have placed over his fellow-servants, forgetful of his duty, having become "*evil*" and wicked.

"*Shall say in his heart,*" that is, shall think within himself, "*My lord is long a coming,*" that is, has deferred his coming.

49. "*And shall begin to strike his fellow-servants,*" for whom, as servants of the same household and occupation, having the same relation to their common master, he should entertain feelings of humanity.

"*And shall eat and drink,*" &c., that is, squander in luxurious living, in society, where he should but seldom appear, the goods which should be expended in works of mercy to the poor, vying with the worldly rich in pomp and worldly show. This is very applicable to worldly-minded ministers of religion.

50. At a day and hour, when he may not expect it, shall come the master of that wicked servant, who forgot that he had a master to whom he was, one day, to be accountable, whose goods he dissipated, whose servants he maltreated, acting more as a cruel, oppressive master himself, than as a kind, humane fellow-servant.

51. "*Shall separate him.*" The Greek word, *διχοτομήσει*—literally, *shall cut in two*—may either mean, that He will have him literally slain, and cut in two, the just punishment of faithless slaves; or, have him separated from the rest of his household, and confined to prison, with other wicked servants.

"*And appoint his portion with the hypocrites*"—(St. Luke xii. 46, "*with unbelievers*")—may either refer to unfaithful servants; and this is expressed here by "*hypocrites,*" these faithless slaves, who serve to the eye of their master, and pretend fidelity in his presence, but, loiter and misspend their time in his absence. This is the meaning of the word, if we adhere to the parable throughout. Or, the words, "*unbeliever*" and "*hypocrite,*" may express, those whom the wicked servant represents, viz., the unbeliever, who is condemned to hell for unbelief; and the wicked Christian, who is condemned for his hypocrisy and wicked life. It is not unusual for our Redeemer, at the close of a parable, to use expressions which are only applicable to the subject which the parable is introduced to illustrate, just as the punishment of "*weeping and gnashing of teeth,*" is that of the persons whom the wicked servant only figuratively represents.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, our Lord exhorts all the faithful to the constant and vigilant performance of good works, and stimulates them thereto by the parable of the ten virgins, of whom five were wise, and five more unwise (1-13). He next points out the necessity of good works, corresponding with the graces and talents God bestows on us, by proposing the example of the worthless servant, who was condemned for having neglected to do good, and turn to profitable account the talent confided to him (14-30). He next describes the last Judgment, the sentence to be passed on the elect and reprobate, the reasons assigned in both cases, which point out the necessity of performing works of mercy, in order to gain heaven and escape hell. Finally, He describes the execution of this irrevocable sentence (31-46).

TEXT.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride.

2. *And five of them were foolish, and five wise.*

3. *But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them.*

4. *But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps.*

5. *And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept.*

6. *And at mid-night there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.*

7. *Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*

8. *And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

9. *The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

10. *Now whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.*

11. *But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us*

12. *But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not.*

13. *Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "Then," at the final coming of the Son of man, when He shall appear unexpectedly, to judge the living and the dead—for, it is of this subject our Lord is treating in the foregoing—"shall the kingdom of heaven," that is, His Church, gathered from all portions of this world, "*be like to ten virgins*," &c., that is to say, something shall take place in His Church, on the occasion of His last coming, similar to what is about being stated in the following parable of the ten virgins, "*who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride*." "*Went out*," may refer to their preparation to go forth; for, it was only afterwards they did so (v. 6), "*go ye forth to meet him*." Or, it might be said, that our Redeemer here mentions, by anticipation, and in a general way, the fact which is afterwards more particularly detailed. "*To meet the bridegroom and the bride*." The Greek copies have only, "*to meet the bridegroom*." And this would seem to accord better with the usage then prevailing, to which there is reference here, of young virgins remaining at the house of the bride, expecting the coming of the bridegroom, who, on his part, was also accompanied by his male attendants, to fetch her from her father's house to his own, or some other place, where the marriage feast was celebrated. Hence, the phrase, *ducere uxorem*, to signify, *marrying a wife*. On this occasion, the young maidens went forth to meet the bridegroom on his approach to the house of the bride, and accompanied him thither. Moreover, we have only the bridegroom mentioned (verse 6), "*Behold the bridegroom cometh . . . meet him*." However, the Vulgate has the words, "*bride and bridegroom*." They are also quoted by the most distinguished of

the holy Fathers (St. Hilary, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, &c) ; and the words may be explained, of the bride and bridegroom leaving the *bride's* house for that of the bridegroom, accompanied by these virgins. It might be also said, that the words, in the application of the parable, may refer to the same person, viz., our Divine Redeemer, who, since His Incarnation, may be regarded both as Bridegroom and Bride, under different relations, as St. Hilary expresses it. For, he says, as the Spirit is bridegroom to the flesh, so is the flesh bride to the Spirit. The number, "*ten*" is used in SS. Scripture, to denote or symbolize an indefinite multitude. It would appear, too, that "*ten*" was the usual number of bridal attendants in Judea. The "*five wise virgins*," are termed such, because they made prudent provision for the future. The others are termed, "*foolish*," for the opposite reason. It is not meant, that the number of reprobate and elect is equal. It is only meant to convey, that even among those having an exterior of piety, who observe purity, and practise certain external acts of piety, nay, even of mercy, adds St. Augustine, symbolized by the burning lamps, there shall be found some excluded from the heavenly banquet.

The literal meaning of the parable hardly needs any explanation. Torches were generally carried on the occasion of nuptial celebrations, which took place at night. A bundle of rags, wound round the end of an iron rod, is said to have served as a torch, the oil being, from time to time, replenished, by dipping the rod in a vessel (Kenrick). The chief matter for explanation is, the scope and application of the several parts of the parable. Regarding the scope of the parable, there can be but very little difficulty. It manifestly is—as appears from verse 13, "*Watch you therefore*," &c.; as also from verse 44 of the preceding chapter—to stimulate us to continued vigilance, and preparation against the coming of our Lord to judgment. It is to this the foregoing examples of the householder, of the faithful servant, &c., manifestly tend. And, although it directly refers to the General Judgment, it also includes the particular judgment, of which the general shall be but a public ratification. Hence, it refers to the coming of our Lord, at the hour of death, which is included under coming at the last day. As to the application of the parable—by "*the kingdom of heaven*," is meant the Church, composed of good and bad. Now, we cannot distinguish between both. But *then*, the parable of the ten virgins shall be clearly illustrated; and although the reprobate, who shall then have been condemned to hell, could not be called the members of the Church; still, they are termed such, having been members during life, before God's judgment was made manifest and executed upon them.

The "*ten virgins*" are understood by some (Chrysostom, Theophylact, &c.), of those who really were virgins; but some were virgins only in body, their souls not being replenished with sanctifying grace and charity. The others, designated "*wise*," were virgins in soul and body. These expositors say, that the object of the parable is to show, that however exalted the virtue of virginity may be, still, it will not suffice, without the works of mercy and charity. But the most generally received opinion is that of St. Jerome, who holds, that, while the word includes virgins as a particular in a general, and hence applied to them by the Church in the Gospel of the Mass for Virgins, it refers generally to all the faithful who are called "*virgins*," on account of the integrity and sincere purity of their faith, whose hearts are not sullied with the prostitution of idolatry, nor their bodies with the sinful pleasures of lust. On the other hand, the Scripture is wont to call heretics and infidels by the name of harlots and adulterers.

The "*spouse*," denotes our Lord, who shall come at judgment to espouse His glorious Church, and with her celebrate the eternal nuptials in His heavenly kingdom.

By the "*lamps*," is commonly understood, the light of faith which all these are

supposed to be gifted with, probably accompanied with external good works; for, as to those who had lived immoral lives, they can hardly be said to be in expectation of, or care for, the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom. The difference, however, between the *wise* and *unwise* virgins in this interpretation, arises from the difference of intention with which their works were performed. The works of the one class were done purely for God, and from motives of charity; whereas, those of the other, were done from motives of gaining human applause and through empty vanity, like the Pharisees of old, for which they already "*received their reward.*"

By "*the oil*," wherewith the "*wise virgins trimmed their lamps,*" are commonly understood, good works, without which the "*lamp is extinguished,*" or "*faith is dead.*" All had "*lamps,*" that is, faith; but only those who had the oil of charity, or good works, were admitted to the nuptial feast—faith, without good works, being insufficient for salvation.

The vessels for containing the oil, mean, the souls or consciences of the faithful. To take oil in their vessels, means, to treasure up an abundance of good works against the coming of our Lord, to "*lay up treasures to themselves in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume,*" &c. (vi. 20.)

"*The delay of the spouse,*" refers to the time between our Lord's Ascension and the General Judgment. And St. Chrysostom remarks, that our Redeemer wishes to convey to His disciples, that He would not come immediately, as some of them erroneously imagined. The word has reference also to the impatience of the virgins who were awaiting Him. For, although the longest time, relative to eternity, is but very short; still, the ardour of His disciples seemed not to be satisfied with anything short of His immediate approach. At the same time, our Redeemer did not wish to convey to them expressly that His coming would be deferred, for fear of rendering them secure or remiss. However, His coming at the death of each was necessarily speedy, as well as uncertain; and thus, they should not fail to prepare themselves. "*They slumbered and slept.*" "*Slumbering,*" which precedes perfect sleep, denotes, the infirmities and sickness, which usher in men's death, which is expressed by, "*they slept.*" Between the final coming of our Lord and His first coming, the faithful, yielding to the necessities of nature, shall "*have slept.*" Death is frequently represented in SS. Scripture, as a state of sleep; since, men are to be once more roused and resuscitated at the General Resurrection. Others, understand, *slumbering* and *slept*, to express, that men shall have ceased to think of our Lord's coming, so that He will come when they are not expecting Him.

6. "*At midnight . . . a cry,*" &c. By "*cry,*" is meant, the Archangel's trumpet, which St. John (v. 28), calls, "*the voice of the Son of God.*" "*Midnight,*" denotes, that His coming shall be concealed from men, and that the summons shall be sent forth when least expected, or, this may be an ornamental part of the parable. (SS. Jerome, Chrysostom, &c.) Others infer from this, that Christ will come to judge the world, at the hour of midnight. St. Jerome tells us, that this was an Apostolical tradition. Hence, formerly at the vigil of the Pasch, the people were not allowed to leave the church till after midnight, from an impression, that Christ would come to judgment, at that hour, as He came at the same hour formerly to slay the first-born of the Egyptians, and liberate the Hebrew people. However, all this regarding the hour of Christ's coming is very uncertain; for, our Redeemer Himself says, "*You know not the day nor the hour.*"

7. The trimming of their lamps, by all these virgins, after being roused from

sleep, denotes, that after all the faithful shall have been resuscitated by the trumpet of the Archangel, they shall proceed to meet their Judge, and, consulting memory, to examine their consciences, regarding the account they are to give for the actions of their entire lives.

8. This is one of the ornamental parts of the parable, having no further significance or illustration; for, on the last day, the reprobate will know well, that the just cannot impart to them any portion of their merits; that each one shall be judged according to his own works, whether good or evil. The words, however, convey to us, the straits and despair to which the wicked shall be reduced on beholding the inevitable damnation to which they are doomed, without any prospect of alleviation or reprieve, from the intercession of friends, or the merits of God's saints, and the unavailing regrets in which they shall indulge at that hour, for not having availed themselves, during life, of the means of securing their salvation.

The words, "*our lamps are gone out*," show, that without the oil of good works, charity, which is the flame that emanates from the lamps, is lost; inasmuch as, without performing good works, which are prescribed by God's Commandments, we forfeit God's grace and friendship. Hence, we must be ever employed in good works, if we wish to preserve and keep alive the holy flame of Divine charity.

9. This, also, is ornamental, and merely intended to complete the literal narrative. If it has any meaning at all, it conveys to us, that at that hour, the just, however they might assist sinners during life, can give no assistance to them, now that the time of mercy and merit is past; that even the just shall tremble for their own salvation. The words may also convey, the reproaches which the reprobate shall meet with on that day, for having, during life, performed their actions to please men who "*sell*" the oil of flattery, and adulation, and foolish passing applause, which are of no avail, but rather a subject of regret at judgment. "*But, let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head*" (Psa. cxl. 5). In the literal reading of this verse there is supposed to be an ellipsis, and the words, "*we fear*" (φοβουμεθα), understood thus—"(*we fear*) lest there be not enough," &c. (Beelen.)

10. This is, like the preceding, ornamental. At the same time, it conveys to us, the fruitless regrets of the reprobate, when, too late, and the time of merit is passed, for not having performed the good works, whereby they might have earned the kingdom of heaven. The coming of the bridegroom represents, the coming of Christ to judgment. The entrance of those who were ready, denotes, the admission of the elect to the joys of heaven, "*the nuptials of the Lamb*" (Apoc. xix. 7). "*The door was shut*," expresses, that the time of doing good is past, and "*the night come when no one can work*."

11. In this verse is conveyed, the despair and anguish of spirit of the reprobate on seeing themselves for ever banished from the glory and beatific vision of God. This anguish is most pathetically described by the Wise man. (c. v. 1, &c.)

12. "*I know you not*," signifies, the knowledge of love, benevolence, and approbation, as if He said: Although well known to Me, still, I do not wish to have any intercourse with you. I disown you, as My children and friends. I reprobate and reject you from the pure joys of My eternal kingdom (see vii. 23).

13. This is the great lesson, which the entire parable is primarily intended to inculcate, and to which the preceding parables, from v. 42 of the preceding chapter, as also the following parable, and the several parts of each parable have reference. To the words of this verse, is added, in the Protestant versions, "*Wherein the Son of man cometh.*" But, these words are rejected by the best critics, and omitted in the chief MSS. They were, most likely, introduced from the margin, as more clearly completing and expressing the sense. For, the words, even in our version, mean: You know not that last day, nor that last hour, when the Lord shall come unexpectedly, like the midnight thief—the hour upon which depends an eternity of happiness or misery. According to the preparation we shall have made, and the vigilance we shall have employed to be always ready and to have the oil of charity and good works always burning in our hearts, with our consciences always pure before God, shall our doom be determined.

But, it may be asked, how can the inference, "*Watch ye, therefore,*" &c., be deduced from the example of the ten virgins, since, *all* are supposed to have *slept*, the "*wise,*" as well as the *unwise*? *Resp.* The example of the *wise* virgins is not proposed to us in this sense: that as they kept a *bodily* watch, we should watch *spiritually*; but only in this sense, that as they prudently provided against the uncertain coming of the spouse, so, we should prudently provide against the uncertain coming of our Lord, in such a way as not to be caught unprepared; this we shall escape, by constantly watching in the performance of good works. Hence, our Lord in this sense, infers, "*Watch ye, therefore,*" &c., as if He said: In order that no such misfortune as befell the unwise virgins may befall you, so that that day should find you unprepared, and thus subject you to exclusion from My kingdom, prepare against that uncertain day. In other words, watch continually in good works, and be not remiss, as you must be persuaded, that any preparation you may make on that day, shall come too late. It is, of course, to be observed, that although our Redeemer directly refers to His coming at the General Judgment, He also includes His coming at the death of each, when the final doom of every man is to be decided, and the sentence to be solemnly and publicly repeated at the General Judgment, already irrevocably pronounced.

We are admonished, therefore, not to live negligently, content merely with the light of faith; but, that we should provide ourselves with the oil of charity and good works, before the arrival of the hour of death; so that, when the Spouse shall have arrived, and demanded an account of our actions, we may have sufficient oil to trim our lamps which shall light us into the banquet-hall of the heavenly kingdom.

TEXT.

14. *For even as a man going into a far country, called his servants, and delivered to them his goods.*

15. *And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey.*

16. *And he that had received the five talents, went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five.*

17. *And in like manner he that had received the two, gained other two.*

18. *But he that had received the one, going his way digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money.*

19. *But after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them.*

20. *And he that had received the five talents coming, brought other five talents, saying*

Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above.

21. *His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

22. *And he also that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me: behold I have gained other two.*

23. *His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

24. *But he that had received the one talent, came and said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewed.*

25. *And being afraid I went and hid thy talent in the earth: behold here thou hast that which is thine.*

26. *And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and gathered where I have not strewed:*

27. *Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury*

28. *Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it him that hath ten talents.*

29. *For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away.*

30. *And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

COMMENTARY.

14. "*For even,*" &c. The object of the following is the same as that of the preceding parable, viz., to impress us all with the necessity of constantly watching in the performance of good works, tending to our own and our neighbour's sanctification, and God's glory, by the good use and employment of the means placed at our disposal, for which we must one day render an exact account. The particle, "*for,*" shows this parable to have reference to the foregoing moral conclusion, "*Watch ye, therefore,*" &c.

"*Even as a man going into a strange,*" &c. There is nothing expressed in the following part to complete the sense, corresponding with the particle, "*as.*" Hence, commentators supply it thus, "*for the kingdom of God,*" or, "*the Son of man,*" coming to exact an account of us in judgment, is the same as, or *God acts, as* "*a man going into a strange,*" &c. Others say, it is not an *elliptical*, but rather, an unfinished construction, or an *anacoluthon*. This parable is *similar* to that recorded by St. Luke (xix. 12), regarding the pounds, referred to a different time and occasion. But, whether it be *same* with it, is disputed among commentators. Some, with SS. Ambrose and Jerome, assert, that it is; that, although there may be some immaterial differences, both as to the time and place to which both narrations refer the event; still, it is substantially the same, and tends to the same object and purpose. Others, with St. Chrysostom, maintain, they are different, uttered on two different occasions. That in St. Luke, was delivered *before* our Redeemer's final approach to Jerusalem. This, in St. Matthew, *after* it, in the week following Palm Sunday. They note several other points of difference, in the parable itself, which may be seen on

examining both passages. In St. Luke, there is mention made of men who refused to be subject to their king, and on his return, were ordered to be slain. This suited the passage in St. Luke, where he taxes the infidelity of the Jews; but not this passage, where in all the parables adduced, our Lord only desires to stimulate all the faithful to vigilance. In St. Luke, the same amount of money (a pound, *mna*), is given to all; here, a different sum is given to different persons. Doubtless, however, the scope and object of both parables are the same.

By "*the man who went into a strange country*," it is agreed by all, is meant, our Divine Redeemer, whom St. Luke designates, "*a certain nobleman*" (xix. 12).

By His "*going into a strange country*," which, St. Luke says, was for the purpose of "*receiving for Himself a kingdom, and returning*," is commonly meant, His ascending into heaven, to receive royal honours, the homage of angels and saints, at the right hand of His Father, whence He is to come, at a future day, to judgment.

By "*His servants*," whom He called together, are, most probably, meant, all *Christians*. For, to all of them, He confided His goods in a lesser or greater degree, and of all of them, shall an exact account be demanded. To them, He refers in the foregoing parable of the "*ten virgins*." It refers, most likely, in a special way, to the pastors of His Church, whom He has placed there, and gifted in different degrees, as is recorded by St. Paul (1 Cor. xii. 4-30; Eph. iv. 11-14). By the *goods* He gave His servants, are meant, the gifts, both in the order of nature and of grace, given us by God, to advance His glory, and our own and our neighbour's salvation. The giving of these goods conveys, that all that we have comes not from ourselves; but, from the bountiful hand of God. The same is expressed by the *talents* in next verse, the unequal number of which marks the unequal distribution of God's gifts, which He dispenses at will.

15. "*To one five talents*," &c. St. Luke says, he gave his ten servants, ten pounds, or, ten definite sums of money. For, this is the original meaning of the word *mna*, from the Hebrew root, *mana*—*he numbered*—a piece to each. By the talents are meant, the several gifts of God, without which we can do nothing, embracing—1st. Grace, properly so called, with faith, hope, charity, and the other virtues. 2nd. The graces called, *gratis datae*, such as the power of working miracles, episcopacy, priesthood, prophecy, &c., given for the benefit of others. 3rd. External gifts and goods of fortune, such as wealth, station, &c. All these, God distributes unequally to different persons, according to His good will and pleasure. All these gifts, are by His ordination, to be employed for the ends they are intended to advance, viz., God's glory and the salvation of souls. As regards the literal meaning of the parable, it is to be observed, that in the East, it was customary to intrust even slaves with the management of some money or goods, to stimulate their industry.

"*To every one according to his proper ability*." How can this be, since the very ability or capacity for employing those gifts profitably, must come from God, and be His gift? Some commentators say, these words are merely ornamental, and without any direct meaning in the parable; that they merely convey, what men ordinarily do in the distribution of their property. They distribute it, having a due regard to the capacity of their servants, their industry and ability to derive profit from it. For, it is a point of faith, that, so far as grace, properly so-called, is concerned, it is not given, in the first instance, according to or in consideration of one's natural capacity or merits; and that nature, however good, is no disposition for grace. This is a point of faith defined against the Pelagians; others say, it has

an application in the parable, and applies to what are called *gratiæ, gratis datæ*, and to conditions of life, such as Magistracy, Episcopacy, Priesthood, &c., the blessings of the second and third order already referred to. For, these states of life are frequently arranged by God, in accordance with the previous dispositions and capacity of those whom He selects for them, and before bestowing any permanent gift or office on any individual, the Almighty bestows on him a capacity or disposition, whether natural or supernatural, to render him fit for the duties annexed to it. This He does frequently, but not always, as the example of Jeremiah alone proves. The words also convey, that in exacting an account of the gifts bestowed on us, He does not ask an account for anything beyond what we can do. He requires nothing impossible, but only what is within our reach, whether in the natural or supernatural order. It also conveys, that, in the unequal distribution of His gifts and vocations, God confers none beyond our strength; but, that He regards each one's power and capacity, so that no one can complain, that more was imposed on him than he could bear.

"*And immediately he took his journey,*" refers to our Saviour's ascension into heaven. St. Luke (xix.) tells us, that before leaving, he enjoined on his servants, "*trade till I come,*" viz., by labouring zealously during life to increase, by good works, the fruit of the talents confided to them, and to present this fruit to him on his return. St. Luke also adds, that the citizens of this man refused to have him reign over them, which refers to the obstinate rejection of our Redeemer by the Jews, who would have no king but Caesar; their persecution of Himself and His Apostles after His Ascension. And that he ordered them (xix. 27) to be slain in his presence, which refers to the total ruin of the Jews by Titus, which was but a type of the eternal ruin of those who continued in their obstinate unbelief.

16. "*And he that had received the five talents . . . gained other five.*" As regards the servant himself, the gaining of five talents means, that by the proper use of the gifts and graces bestowed on him by God, he gained, in the proportion of the gifts bestowed on him, an increase of grace, which is the seed of glory, and the measure of the rewards which he afterwards received. As regards the Master or Almighty God, the "*five talents*" mean, that this servant laboured strenuously to promote God's glory, in the work of self-sanctification, and the salvation of his brethren.

17. The observations made in the foregoing, apply equally to the present verse. The man who "*received the two talents,*" gained an increase proportioned to the amount of goods confided to his management. In St. Luke, the master is represented as giving the same amount to each of his ten servants, who are commanded to traffic upon it till his return, some of whom gained in the proportion of ten talents; others, five, &c. Here, the amount given is said to be unequal.

Some commentators understand, by the "*servant,*" who, after receiving "*five talents,*" gained "*other five,*" the Apostles, including St. Paul, whose gifts were so great and whose labours so very successful and remarkable: and by those, who received two and gained other two talents, the other ministers of Christ, who received less than the Apostles, and were faithful in discharging their ministry, and serving the Church according to the measure of their gifts and graces. It is, at the same time, to be remarked, that the test of our fidelity in the discharge of our duties, is not the success that may attend us, but our labours. Hence, St. Paul in stating that God's grace was not vain, in him, says, the proof of it is, that he had laboured more than

all the others (1 Cor. xv.); and in reference to other Evangelical workmen, each of whom acts according to the gift he received from God, the Apostle only regards them, as labouring in planting and watering; the *increase* must come from God, and the reward of each is not according to his *success*, but, "*according to his labour*" (1 Cor. iii. 8).

18. The idea expressed by "*digging in the earth, and hiding his lord's money there,*" is conveyed by St. Luke (xix. 20), thus: "*kept it laid up in a napkin.*" The meaning of both phrases is the same, viz., that he kept it unemployed and laid by unprofitably, without securing the expected gain. It *may* happen, and oftentimes *does* happen, that those who are blessed with "*five talents,*" gifts of the highest order, leave them unemployed, nay, abuse them, as often as those do, who receive but "*one,*" or gifts of lesser value. But, our Redeemer instances the abuse or neglect of grace in the man who received but "*one talent,*" in order to convey to us, more forcibly, the greater guilt, and, consequently, the heavier punishment of him who neglects or abuses greater gifts, from which greater profit would be expected, when the man who received but lesser gifts is represented as very criminal, and deserving of the severest punishments. Our Lord also wishes to show, how inexcusable the servant is, since he did not require extraordinary exertions to produce the gain proportioned to the talents he received. Hence, his indolence had no palliation.

If such be the guilt and punishment of the unprofitable, idle servant, what shall be the guilt of those who not only neglect God's graces, but positively abuse them, squander them extravagantly, and turn them against the master himself, by converting them to the worst purposes, to promote the reign of the enemy of God, and of souls, turning against Him the very arms with which He supplied them.

19. "*And after a long time,*" which is expressed by St. Luke (xix. 15), "*he returned, having received the kingdom.*" The words refer to the account to be rendered by each one in judgment, of the mode in which he employed the several gifts of God, both general and particular. The "*long time*" refers to the long interval between Christ's Ascension and the General Judgment, although the sentence passed at the General Judgment, is but a more solemn and public ratification of that which occurs immediately after the death of each one; hence, it refers to the period of each man's life. The words also convey, that God gives every one ample time to employ the gifts bestowed on him profitably, before exacting an account; and that, unlike certain severe, exacting masters, He will not exact the fruit of His gifts before the proper time. It also refers to the patience and long-suffering of God, in His dealings with His creatures.

20-23. The servant who received "*five,*" as well as he who received "*two talents,*" acknowledge that it was owing to the gifts of their master they gained anything: whence it is inferred, that the chief principle in the performance of good works is the grace of God, "*Not I, but the grace of God with me*" (1 Cor. xv. 10); and this is more clearly expressed by St. Luke (xix. 16), "*thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*"

"*Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things.*" The goods and graces confided to us during life, however great in themselves, as the seeds of future glory, are still but *trifling*, in a comparative sense, compared with the great bliss, and ineffable happiness in store for God's elect, the exceeding great magnitude of which is expressed in the words, "*over many things,*" and is more

fully conveyed in the words, "*enter into the joy of thy Lord*," which shows, the ineffable delights and eternal enjoyment of the saints, when they shall become, as far as their finite capacity will permit, sharers in God's own beatitude, heirs of His kingdom, and co-heirs with His eternal Son Jesus Christ, the predestined model of His elect, and the first-born among many brethren, sharers with Him in "*the joy of their Lord*," which neither "*eye hath seen nor ear heard*," &c. The words, "*place thee over many things*," are differently expressed by St. Luke (xix), "*have power over ten . . . five cities*," in allusion to the mode of acting often resorted to by kings, in rewarding their faithful servants with governments, more or less important, according to their merits and capacity. It is deserving of remark, that the same praises, the same reward, are liberally bestowed on the servant who gained only *two talents*, as on him who gained *five*. "*Well done . . . enter into the joy*," &c., because, as St. Jerome remarks, "the Lord does not so much regard the amount of gain, as the fulness of desire"—"*non tam considerat Dominus lucri magnitudinem quam studii voluntatem*"—and our reward is proportioned, not to the fruit of our labours, but to the labour itself.

24. The servant who received but "*one talent*," and left it unprofitably idle, wishes to excuse himself for his neglect, and casts the blame on his master, and thus adds the sin of pride to that of sloth, when he should have humbly acknowledged his fault, and craved pardon and forgiveness. "*A hard man*," that is, a man of a severe, harsh, grinding disposition, bent on acquiring lucre by every means, no matter how iniquitous or oppressive. Interpreters generally regard these words as ornamental, or introduced for the purpose of completing the full literal sense of the parable, rather than as having any particular meaning in its application; for, it is not likely the damned will thus address our Redeemer in judgment, their own conscience, and knowledge of their crimes, bearing testimony against them. It may, however, be said, on the other hand, that, not unlikely, the damned will, on that day, in a fit of madness and despair, rise against their Judge, and, with blasphemous impiety, upbraid Him as the cause of their miseries, and, in hell, shall eternally blaspheme Christ and His saints. Perhaps, in this sense, the words of this verse may not be without application in the parable. The words, also, convey, that the reprobate shall be without excuse on the Day of Judgment. "*Reapest where thou hast not sown*," is a sort of common adage, expressive of cruel exaction, and grinding injustice.

25. Being afraid, in consequence of the reputed unrelenting harshness of his master, lest, if in trading, he either lost the principal, or secured not the expected amount of gain, he should doubly exasperate him, this foolish servant deemed it the safer course to remain idle, and not endanger the talent intrusted to him.

26. "*Wicked and slothful servant*." "*Wicked*," that is, malicious in imputing his own guilty and slothful conduct to his master. "*Thou knewest*," &c., that is, taking you at your word, admitting what you say to be true. It is an *argumentum ad hominem*, founded on the servant's own expressed admission or confession, which is more clearly conveyed by St. Luke (xix. 22), "*Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked*," &c. The words are an illustration of what is termed a rhetorical *synchorexis*, involving no real admission; but, an argument scoffingly conceded, for the purpose of retorting more pointedly. If thou knewest that I reaped where I sowed not, thou shouldst know that I would strictly exact fruit where I sowed, as I have done in committing to you my money.

27. On the supposition which you make, you ought, at least, to have adopted the easiest, least laborious, and least dangerous means of acquiring interest, by confiding it to "*the bankers*," &c. These words are no argument, either in favour of usury or against it, even if we speak of *usury* in the worst sense of the word, since the whole passage is spoken by *synchoresis*, in the sense already explained. At all events, they would convey no approbation of usury, since, what our Redeemer really wished to convey is, that the servant should have exerted himself, in some of the ordinary ways, for procuring gain from the talent of his master. Our Lord no more approves of illicit usury here, than He does of the dishonesty of the unjust steward (Luke xvi.), or the lies of the Egyptian midwives (Exod. i. 19). What is commended in the former case, is the industry and wisdom exhibited by the unjust steward; and in the latter, the humanity manifested in the rescuing of the Hebrew children. So it is, also, in the present instance, even supposing *synchoresis* out of the question in the passage.

28. "*Take ye away, therefore*," &c. The master tells his attendant servants to take this talent, and give it to the man who had "*ten talents*." He thus shows, the injustice of the charge of griping avarice preferred against him by his wicked servant, since, far from appropriating to himself the talent taken from the unprofitable servant, he hands it over to the servant, who turned to the best account the ten talents confided to him. The words are partly ornamental, and partly applicable to the subject of the parable. They are *applicable*, so far as the *taking away* of the talent is concerned, since, Almighty God oftentimes, in this life, deprives men both of the gifts of grace and of nature, which they abuse. He always deprives the man of sanctifying grace who abuses His graces, by the commission of mortal sin; and, on the Day of Judgment, He shall take away from the reprobate the gifts they neglected or abused.

But, "*the giving of it to the man who had ten talents*," is merely ornamental, and has no particular application in the parable, save that it may convey, that the saints in heaven shall derive additional joy from considering the good use they made of their talents, compared with the reprobate, and shall be filled with happiness, so complete, as if all the gifts of the reprobate were transferred to them. Should the words have reference to this life, and to the private judgments of God, on His faithful servants, and His idle servants, the words may have application in this sense, that, while God deprives the wicked of His graces, in punishment of their sins and negligences, He increases the gifts and graces of His faithful servants, which, if not *specifically*, shall be *generically* the same as the gifts withdrawn from sinners. St. Luke relates, that the attendant ministers of the Master seemed to wonder at this arrangement. Hence, they said, "*Lord, he hath ten pounds?*" as if to say, is it not more natural to give it to him who hath only "*five pounds?*" Hence, our Lord concludes the parable, in the following verse, with the general saying, which applies to the subject matter.

29. "*For, to every one that hath*," &c. (see xiii. 12), that is, to every one that, by co-operation, with grace, acquires further graces and talents, "*it shall be given*," that is, grace and glory, shall be given as a reward. Or, "*hath*," may mean, who properly *uses* the talents given him; for, strictly speaking, he who *uses* and employs his talent, *has* it; while as regards the sluggard, who uses it not, it is the same as if he *had* it not, at all.

"*That hath not*," may mean, as above, hath not increased or derived any gain from it, or who *uses* it not, suffering it to lie useless and idle. "*That which he hath not*," viz., the talent, the graces he gained nothing from, or which he did not *properly use*.

"*That also which he seemeth to have,*" that is, which although he actually possessed, yet acted in relation to it, as if he had it not, or made no good use whatever of it, so as to advance the interests of Him who gave it.

"*Shall be taken away,*" the very lights, whether natural or supernatural, with which he was favoured, shall be taken away from him, on the Day of Judgment, and sometimes this happens even in this life.

30. And by God's just judgment, this useless servant, shall be, for ever, cast into darkness, and condemned to the fire of hell.

If such be the rigours of God's judgment upon the merely unprofitable servant, who, so far as the parable goes, is not charged with any positive crime, but only with criminal apathy and neglect in not employing profitably the talents confided to him, what shall be the rigours of Divine judgment on those, who squander God's favours, and by positive crime, and a sinful course of scandalous life, turn against Him the gifts He gave them, and employ them in the service of His enemy.

The three preceding parables, employed one after another, by St. Matthew, denote three distinct classes among the faithful, who shall be condemned. The first, relative to the servant, who maltreated his fellow-servants, and dilapidated his master's goods (xxiv. 48), refers to those who openly lead impious lives.

The second, regarding the ten virgins, denotes, those who, apparently religious, are still not sufficiently watchful to provide for themselves, and fail to refer their good actions to God's glory, such as hypocrites.

The third, regarding the parable of the talents, denotes these idle, indolent Christians, who, by a kind of impious prudence, become negligent, and charge their criminal torpor on Almighty God Himself, whom they pretend to fear. In the *first* parable is taxed open impiety and immoral conduct; in the *second*, imprudent negligence; in the *third*, negligence, seemingly prudent. If we join together the foregoing four parables, we shall find matter for special instruction. In that of the householder (xxiv. 43), we are reminded of observing diligence, which, however, being insufficient, we are warned in that of the unfaithful servant, of the necessity of fidelity; in that of the virgins, of the necessity of prudent provision for the future; and in that of the talents, of the necessity of labouring advantageously for the interests of our heavenly Master. We should, therefore, be *vigilant, faithful, prudent, and profitable*, while preparing for the coming of our Lord to judgment (Jansenius Gandavensis).

TEXT.

31. *And when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty.*

32. *And all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats:*

33. *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.*

34. *Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

35. *For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in:*

36. *Naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.*

37. *Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry, and fed thee, thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

38. *And when did we see thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and covered thee?*
 39. *Or when did we see thee sick or in prison, and came to thee?*
 40. *And the king answering, shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.*
 41. *Then he shall say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.*
 42. *For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink.*
 43. *I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked and you covered me not: sick and in prison, and you did not visit me.*
 44. *Then they also shall answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?*
 45. *Then He shall answer them, saying: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me.*
 46. *And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just, into life everlasting.*

COMMENTARY.

31. In the preceding parables of the talents, ten virgins, &c., our Redeemer wished to inculcate vigilance in preparing for His coming judgment. Now, laying aside all figurative language, He clearly and graphically describes the mode in which He is to exercise judgment.

"*When the Son of man.*" As man, Christ will judge the world, "*and He hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man*" (John v. 27). It is in His human form, now regarded with contempt, that the just and the impious shall behold Christ clothed "*in the majesty and glory,*" which is due to Him, as the true Son of God.

"*Shall come,*" that is, make His appearance visibly. There is a tacit contrast here between His *first* coming, in lowliness, and His *second*, in power and majesty.

He shall not come alone. He shall be accompanied by "*all the Angels.*" So that, heaven being, for a moment, vacated, all the Angels shall descend with the Judge, as attendants, to add to the solemnity of the scene, and to act as messengers of His will, and to execute His decrees (Zach. xiv. 5).

"*Then He shall sit on the seat of His majesty,*" that is, shall appear as a glorious Judge in the exercise of His judiciary power. He already sits on the right hand of Majesty on high. That glory is now concealed from the world. But then, it shall be visibly seen by all mankind. The imagery is borrowed partly from the custom of kings, who come, accompanied by the princes of their court, to enact laws, or solemnly dispense justice; and partly from Eastern usage, in keeping the sheep and the goats asunder.

The word, "*sit,*" is allusive to the posture of kings and judges in dispensing justice. Hence, the words are more expressive of His judicial power than of His bodily posture. What "*the throne of His majesty*" is, is not easily ascertained. Some understand it, of the bright cloud on which He shall appear seated. Others, of the choirs of Angels, upon whose shoulders, He shall be borne in triumph. Hence, some of them are called "*thrones,*" their functions, or office, being, to uphold the majesty of God.

32. "*And all the nations shall be gathered*"—by the ministry of Angels—"together before Him." "*All nations,*" embracing all men, of every age and nation, without exception. The words, "*all nations,*" carry more weight than, *all men.* It adds to our ideas of the majesty of the Judge, to proclaim Him as the Judge of all nations,

without distinction of Jew or Gentile, Christian or unbeliever. "*He is appointed by God judge of the living and of the dead*" (Acts x. 42).

They "*shall be gathered together,*" in some determinate place, which is generally supposed to be the Valley of Josaphat, and the surrounding districts (Joel iii. 2), sanctified by the laborious life, preaching, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord. We are informed by St. Paul, that the just shall be snatched into the air to meet the Judge, when, doubtless, they shall receive, at His right hand, the sentence of approval. The wicked shall remain at His left, on the earth.

"*And He shall separate them,*" &c. This He shall do by the ministry of Angels, as the shepherd returning home at evening, separates the sheep and the goats, that were, during the day, allowed to roam through the same pastures, just as the wicked are, during life, undistinguished, even in God's Church, from the elect.

33. He compares the elect to "*sheep,*" on account of their innocence, simplicity, meekness, and beneficence; the wicked to "*goats,*" because of the offensive smell, the lascivious, impure nature, the quarrelsome dispositions of these animals.

"*He shall place the sheep,*" that is, the elect, "*on His right,*" as the more honourable place, viz., in the air, whence they shall ascend to heaven. The "*right hand,*" is the symbol of happiness, glory, and triumph. "*The goats,*" or reprobate, "*He shall set on His left,*" the symbol of misery, servitude, and opprobrium. They shall also occupy a lower position on the earth, whence they shall be swallowed down to hell, that shall open wide its jaws to receive them for ever. This sitting at the right hand and at the left, denotes the election of the one, and the reprobation of the other. This division was typified by the ordinance of Moses, commanding the Israelites, after entering the land of promise (Deut. xxvii.), that these six tribes, whose fathers were born of the freedwomen, wives of Jacob, viz., Lia and Rachel, would stand upon Mount Garazim to bless the people; and the other six, whose fathers were born of handmaids, except Reuben, whose crime with his father's wife, caused him to be numbered with those descended from handmaids, would stand towards, or, near Mount Hebal, to curse, that is, to answer, Amen, as it is commonly understood, to the maledictions, to be pronounced by the Levites. This was done, as we read (Josue viii. 33).

34. "*Then shall the king say,*" &c. Having called Himself, "*the Son of man,*" and exhibited Himself, under the figure of a "*shepherd,*" He now assumes the title of "*King,*" it being the part of a king to dispense rewards and punishment, and exercise judiciary power, and also to invite others to a participation of His kingly state and power.

"*Come, you blessed of My Father,*" &c. He commences the general judgment with His elect, as the most honourable; and, moreover, to show that God is more prone to dispense blessings, than to utter maledictions; more disposed to reward than to punish.

"*Come,*" from darkness to light; from servitude to the liberty of the sons of God; from labour to rest; from war to peace; from death to life; from the society of the wicked to the company of angels. "*COME,*" and be eternally united with Me; inebriated with the plenty of My house, and ingulphed in the torrents of My delights.

"*Ye blessed of My Father.*" "*Blessed,*" by Him to whom, by appropriation, belong power and predestination, "*with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*" (Ephes. i.), through the merits of My blood. This blessedness includes their predestination, in the first place; and next, the spiritual blessings of justification actually conferred on them, together with the future blessings of glorification and

happiness, now about to be conferred on them; "*whom God loved and predestined, BEFORE the world; called FROM the world; cleanse and sanctified IN the world; and now shall exalt and magnify AFTER the world*" (St. Augustine, Soliloquies).

"*POSSNESS.*" The Greek word, *κληρονοματε*, signifies, to possess, by hereditary right, as Sons of God, His heirs and co-heirs of His Son.)

"*The kingdom,*" of heaven, the empyreal heaven, with all its ineffable delights, the society of the Blessed and Angels, possessing for ever, the qualities of glorified bodies and beatified souls.

"*Prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" In this, is conveyed more than is expressed. It means, prepared for them from all eternity, in the predestinating decrees of God, which is clearly expressed by St. Paul in other words, "*He hath chosen us in Him BEFORE the foundation of the world*" (Ephes. i. 4). Hence, this preparation of the kingdom means, the predestination of men for that kingdom. It also may mean, *actually* prepared at creation. For, God created the empyreal heaven, to be the eternal abode of the Saints. The Souship of God, conferring a right to His inheritance, is *merited* by adults. Hence, they receive the crown of glory in heaven, not only by right of *inheritance*, generously granted by God; but, also as the *reward of merit*. While *infants* can only have the title of *inheritance*, as sons of God, *adults* must also have the twofold title of *inheritance* and *merit*.

35, 36. In these two verses are recited six corporal works of Mercy, to which is likewise added a seventh from Tobias (xii. 12), viz., burying the dead. Hence, we commonly reckon *seven* corporal works of Mercy. Our Redeemer selects out of the entire catalogue of good works, whereby the elect merited heaven, these works of Mercy, to show, how much He values the exercise of mercy, and to impress upon His followers, that, whatever else they may do, however heroic their other actions may be, if they omit showing mercy, they can never be united with Him, who is Mercy itself; nor can they, otherwise, obtain admission into the kingdom of His mercy.

If we do not love our neighbour whom we see, "*how can we love God whom we see not?*" (1 John iv. 20). It is true, that among the elect, there shall be many on whom this duty cannot devolve, having been themselves poor and miserable; themselves the objects of corporal mercy and compassion. But, our Redeemer instances this among the many other examples of virtue and good works, to show its great importance; and because, it is the virtue most necessary for upholding society, and binding its several members more closely together.

He says, "*I was hungry,*" &c., to convey to us, that, as head of His mystical body, He was share^d in the sufferings of all the other members, and alleviated in their exemption from suffering; and He shows the merit of succouring the poor, when it is Christ Himself we are succouring. St. Paul beautifully explains this union of the members of Christ's mystic body. (1 Cor. xii. 12, &c.) "*I was hungry,*" &c. *I*, who am your Creator, your God, your Redeemer. *I*, the great source, from which proceed all blessings, as well in the natural as in the supernatural order. *I*, who endured so much to save you from the eternal torments of the damned. "*And YOU gave ME to eat,*" shows, the great merit of exercising the works of mercy; since, it is not man, but God, we are relieving. That wretched, ragged—nay, sinful beggar, is the representative of Jesus Christ, and whatever we do for him, our Lord will regard as done for Himself. These seven corporal works of Mercy, expressed by the words, *visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo*, include the spiritual works of Mercy, also, which are so clearly marked out, and so strongly commended in SS. Scripture, viz., to correct the sinner, to give counsel to those in doubt, to instruct the ignorant, to console the

sorrowful; to bear the imperfections and injuries of our neighbour; to pardon our offenders; to pray for the salvation of our neighbours. These are expressed in the words, *consule, castiga, solare, remitte, fer, ora*.

Whether our Redeemer is to utter those words, sensibly, in presence of the elect and reprobate, it is hard to ascertain. The Judgment shall not take place, like the Resurrection, in the twinkling of an eye, *ictu oculi*. For, it is described in such a way as would imply some delay. "*The judgment sat, and the books were opened.*" (Dan. vii. 10; Apoc. x.) Most likely, this opening of the Books, refers to the particular knowledge disclosed through the conscience of each one, in displaying his actions (Rom. ii. 16). It is most likely, that, while the power of God shall make known to each one, by a sort of particular judgment, through the medium of his own conscience, what are his particular deeds, his merits or demerits; and, shall have this made known in particular to all the rest of mankind, He shall sensibly utter the sentence of approbation and condemnation, and address it in general terms, to the assembled human race. It also seems to be most generally agreed upon, that, while our Redeemer shall utter, in a loud voice, the sentence of the elect and of the reprobate, He will not utter, in a similar voice, the motives of His sentence, "*I was hungry,*" &c., but that these shall be made known privately, by a sort of spiritual instinct or revelation.

That *the infants who died without baptism* shall appear, on this occasion, and see the glory of the Judge, seems to be generally agreed upon; but what their judgment or amount of privation is a matter not generally agreed upon; nor, indeed, can it be determined. That they shall not be admitted *to the kingdom of heaven*, is quite certain. It is commonly held they shall enjoy, for ever, the greatest *natural* felicity, ever enjoyed on this earth, united to God by *natural love and knowledge of Him*. (St. Thomas Q.D. 33. Q. 2 art. 2 ad. 5.)

As regards *infidels*, it is commonly supposed, that, as "*he who doth not believe is already judged*" (John iii. 18), the infidels shall appear to receive the sentence of eternal damnation, without any particular investigation into their lives, however wicked in other respects. The form of judgment, recorded by St. Matthew, regards the faithful, of whom some shall be rewarded for their *good* works; others condemned for their wicked works, or omission of good works. Ven. Bede reckons four classes of men at the last judgment. 1. Those who shall exercise judgment, and not themselves be judged, viz., the Apostles. 2. Those who shall neither exercise nor undergo judgment, their sentence of condemnation having been already pronounced, viz., the impious and unbelievers. 3. Those who shall undergo, and shall pass judgment—viz., the multitude of the faithful who obeyed the Gospel. 4. Those who shall not themselves judge, but shall undergo judgment, and be condemned, viz., the wicked Jews, who lived before the Gospel law, and the wicked Christians, who disobeyed the Gospel.

37-39. This is expressive of the astonishment of the elect, on seeing themselves so munificently rewarded for their comparatively trifling deeds of charity; and of their humility, in seeming to be unconscious of having done anything good, referring all to His grace. It is not likely, that the just shall utter such words on the occasion; but, the words are introduced to give our Lord an opportunity of subjoining the following important declaration.

40. "*As long as you did it,*" &c. "*As long.*" *Inasmuch* as you did it; *so far*, as you did it "*to one of these least ones,*" among Christians, who, from their lowliness and wretched condition, whether voluntarily undertaken, as in the case of the voluntary

poor; or, whose lot was cast in humble and distressful circumstances, whom He now calls His "*brethren*," deigning to exalt them to a brotherhood with Himself. From the very beginning He was pleased to address them, as such: "*Whosoever shall do the will of My Father . . . he is My brother*," &c. (xii. 50); also, "*I will declare My name to My brethren* (Heb. ii. 12).

41. "*Depart from Me*," you, who are so unlike Me, and never studied to become assimilated to Me in your lives. "*Depart*," far away, so as never to see My face. "*From Me*," who am Justice, Sanctity, Life, the Supreme Good, the Sovereign Beatitude. I can no longer endure your presence. "*You cursed*," hateful to God, and execrated by Him. He does not say, "*cursed*" of *My Father*, as He said of the just, "*blessed of my Father*," to show, that God is not the author of their misery, as He is of the happiness of His elect. They themselves were the authors, the cause of their own misfortunes, owing to the wicked lives which they led. The words, "*Depart from Me*," refer to the pain of *loss*, which is reputed by many to be the greatest torment of the damned.

But, *where* are they to go from Him? "*Into everlasting fire*." These words denote, the pain of *sense*. "*Fire*," to last, not merely for a *time*; but, *for ever*. "*Prepared for the devil and his angels*." Although the antithesis is very marked in the other parts of the sentence, "*Come, ye blessed*;" "*begone, ye cursed*;" "*possess the kingdom*;" "*depart into everlasting fire*;" still, it is not fully carried out in these words. For, in reference to His elect, He says, "*prepared for you*," in order to show, the beneficent designs of God in their regard; and to convey, that if they obtain heaven, as the reward of merit, this is attributable to the predestinating mercy and grace of God. But here, He says not, "*prepared for you*;" but, "*for the devil and his angels*," to show, that, so far as He is concerned, God did not wish for their damnation, but rather for the salvation of all; and that they brought it upon themselves to be involved in the fate of the demons. It was not God prepared this torture for them. It was they themselves that did so. The words, "*Depart from Me*," express the pain of *loss*, "*into everlasting fire*," the pain of *sense*, and the *eternity* of both. The words also convey the unspeakable severity of the pains of the damned; since, they are to be sharers in the inconceivable tortures, which these fiends of hell have earned for themselves. The fire of hell was "*prepared for the devil and his (associate) angels*," antecedently, to the sin or creation of man.

42, 43. Here is assigned the cause of their condemnation, *viz.*, their omission to succour Him. The words, as regards the reprobate, are very striking. "*I was hungry*." *I*, who gave you all you had, or hoped to have. *I*, to whom you were indebted for everything. "*I was hungry*," and suffering in every way; and with the means of relieving Me within your reach, *you* refused to do so. You refused to pay Me back even the tithes of what was my own. In the words which express the cause of the condemnation of the reprobate, two things are to be observed:—

Firstly. That they are represented as condemned for mere sins of omission; and if such be the severity of the sentence against those who omitted doing good, what shall be the punishment of those who never ceased to do evil? If he be condemned, who neglected to solace the afflicted, what shall be his punishment who added affliction to affliction, who persecuted the poor and the needy?

Secondly. The comparatively trifling things required of the reprobate, in order to escape damnation. Even though they might have committed other grievous sins beyond number, still, if they had shown a merciful, beneficent disposition to relieve

those in distress, they would, most probably, have inclined God to forgive them, to grant them, in consideration of their merciful deeds, grace and mercy in turn, full time and grace for repentance. Having shown no mercy, they dried up the fountain of mercy, and received *a judgment without mercy*, in consequence.

It may be laid down as a general truth, founded on experience, that, in the end, a good death awaits those who show mercy to the poor. Indeed, the experience of God's dealing with His creatures would show this to be generally true. So that we may say, that the final conversion of great sinners, the grace of true repentance accorded to them, was owing to their having themselves shown mercy; that although God had reason to condemn them, considering their many outrages, which provoked His anger, yet even in His anger He remembered their deeds of mercy, and spared them accordingly.

Let us hear St. Augustine on this subject: "Scriptum est, 'Sicut aqua extinguit ignem, ita eleemosyna extinguit peccatum,' proinde illis, quos coronaturus est, solas eleemosynas imputabit. Tanquam dicens; difficile est, si examinem vos, et appendam vos, et scruter diligentissime peccata vestra, non inveniam unde vos damnem. Sed ite in regnum. 'Esurivi enim et dedistis mihi manducare.' Non, ergo, itis in regnum, quia non peccastis; sed quia peccata vestra eleemosynis redemistis" (St. Augustine, Ser. 33, de diversis). So that the words of our Lord are literally fulfilled. It is *because*, they ministered to His wants, in His suffering members, that those, who were wicked before, are now saved, and crowned with glory. The same may apply to *all* the just, who received the grace of final perseverance, on account of their deeds of mercy, which they would forfeit had they neglected to show mercy.

Hence, whether we consider those among God's elect, who were once sinners, or those who preserved their innocence, it may be said, that, while their salvation was the immediate result of God's infinite mercy; it was remotely, in every case, the result of their mercy to the poor, which influenced God to favour them with a judgment of mercy.

It is, unfortunately, equally true of those who are hard-hearted towards the poor, however observant in other respects, that, in almost every case, they die a bad death, and receive "*a judgment without mercy, as they themselves did not show mercy.*"

44, 45. They shall thus arrogantly question Him, in a fit of despair, charging our Lord with being an unjust judge, condemning them unjustly. This they shall not do in words, but in their thoughts, their conscience bearing testimony against them. For, our Redeemer would not permit them thus to gainsay His just judgment. The just and the reprobate shall both utter these words, but from quite different feelings; the former, from feelings of humility, which made them seem unconscious of the good they did, and of gratitude to God, for all His mercies, to which they ascribe their salvation; the latter, out of feelings of pride and despair, endeavouring to make excuses for their sins, "*ad excusandas excusationes in peccatis.*" Had they the smallest feelings of charity; had they the bowels of commiseration, they would not have failed to see, in the afflicted poor, the image of Him, who Himself became poor to make us rich, nor would they have refused Him any assistance, in the persons of the poor, who gave even the last drop of His precious blood for them.

One is touched, says St. Chrysostom (Hom. 80 in Mattheum), with compassion on beholding a beast die of hunger, and we are borne naturally to relieve him; and yet, without emotion, we hear our Lord and Master calling for bread, in the person of His starving poor, and are insensible to the pressing wants of our brother, purchased by the blood of Christ. We are deaf to the voice of God, who demands of us, to

succour His poor members, only for the purpose of bestowing His treasures on us. We appear indifferent to the praises and crowns which the Son of God will bestow in the midst of the assembled nations: and to the ineffable glory with which the just shall be clad as their recompense. What tears should suffice to deplore such blindness and insensibility? What excuse for these miserable wretches, upon whom, neither the fear of punishment, nor the hopes of eternal goods, can make any impression?

This dialogue between our Lord and the damned, although it shall not take place in words, is introduced to give us an idea of the heinous nature of the crime of inhumanity to the poor.

46. The sentence of the Judge shall not be in vain. It shall be executed without delay, without appeal, without any diminution or remission of punishment.

“*And these*”—the last-named class, the reprobate—“*shall go into everlasting punishment.*” The earth shall open, and hell swallow them down into its seething furnaces of lurid fire and burning brimstone for ever, before the just ascend into heaven. (This is implied in the order of narrative given here), in order to increase the felicity of the just, by the contrast of their happiness with the misery of the reprobate, and by the consideration of their escape from these dreadful torments, owing to the gratuitous mercy of God, which they shall unceasingly magnify and extol for all eternity.

In this verse, is contained a clear refutation of the errors of Origen, and of the Anabaptists, regarding the eternity of the pains of hell. For, it is said here, the damned will go into eternal punishment, as the just into life everlasting. The Greek word for “*everlasting*” is the same in both (*aiónion*).

The eternal duration of punishment for a sin committed in an instant may seem strange, but, even human laws visit certain crimes committed in an instant with exile, or death, which is a sort of eternal exclusion from society (St. Augustine, Lib. 21, c. 11); and in reference to the eternity of God’s punishment, we should bear in mind—1. That the will of the sinner is such, that he would sin eternally, if he could. 2. That the offence is offered to an eternal God, a God of infinite majesty. 3. That sin deserves punishment as long as its guilt remains unexpiated; and, as in hell there is no redemption, no grace, no expiation, the guilt of sin remains for ever. Hence, God, who must hate sin, must punish it as long as it remains, that is to say, for eternity.

This applies as well to believers, as to unbelievers. For, it is to believers, the sentence, or rather, the cause of the sentence, applies; since, it is not to the want of faith, but of good works, the damnation of the reprobate is ascribed in this passage.

Thus shall have ended the terrible “*day of the Lord*,” this last of days, after which there shall be no longer days, nor years, nor times, nor seasons, nor ages. Time is now closed for ever. An awful eternal silence shall reign over what was once the face of Nature. All that shall remain of this immense creation shall be a boundless chaos. Man shall have entered the house of his eternity. We should all provide against this dreadful moment, which awaits all, not by mere wishes, not by mere barren desires of conversion; but, by labouring to perform the good works which the Sovereign Judge shall, on that day, demand at our hands—good works of charity and beneficence, towards “*these least ones*”—His afflicted poor, we should “*make sure our vocation and election*” (2 Peter i. 10).

At present, in regard to every one, may be repeated the words of Moses to the

Jewish people, "*I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, benediction and malediction*" (Deut. xxx. 19). To us in this life is proposed to choose between the joys of heaven and the pains of hell; the broad and the narrow way. Upon the choice we shall make now while we have time, while the day for working lasts, must depend, the term of either eternal happiness or eternal woe we shall arrive at in eternity, "*Janua celi, ora pro nobis.*"

CHAPTER XXVI.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist narrates our Redeemer's prediction of His death, just now at hand. The meeting of the Jewish Sanhedrim for the purpose of devising measures to insure His death (1-5). The anointing of His feet at Bethania with precious ointment by Magdalen, which made the avaricious Judas murmur, and furnished him with a pretext for betraying His Lord (6-9). Our Lord's defence of the woman, whose act, He declares to be praiseworthy, considering the religious end she had in view; He predicts, that her act would be regarded in this light at a future day, throughout the entire world (10-13). The treasonable bargain entered into by Judas to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver (14-16). The commission given to Peter and John to go into Jerusalem and prepare the Pasch, with which they strictly complied (17-19). His prediction that one of His Apostles present would betray Him; and mild means having failed to reclaim the traitor, whom He refrains from mentioning by name, He employs the threats, unhappily, in vain, of eternal woe to effect this (17-25). The institution of the adorable Eucharist, both as a Sacrament and Sacrifice at the Last Supper. Our Redeemer's valedictory address, pointing to the joys in store for His faithful servants in the kingdom of His Father (26-30). We have next an account of our Lord's prediction of the cowardly desertion of Him by His Apostles, Peter's confident declaration, that he would die first, in which the other Apostles joined him. Our Lord's prediction of Peter's denial of Him before cockerow (31-35). Our Lord's agony in the garden, and His fervent, protracted prayer (36-46). We have, next, the treason of Judas; the apprehension of our Lord; His rebuke to His followers, who meant to defend Him. His rebuke to His enemies, who came to treat Him as a midnight robber (47-56). The examination of our Lord before the assembled *Sanhedrim*; the false testimony suborned for the purpose. The dignified silence of our Lord, with reference to the false testimony adduced against Him. His solemn declaration of His Divinity, when officially questioned in the name of the living God, by the High Priest. The blasphemous conduct of the High Priest. His iniquitous judgment, in which the other members of the court joined (57-66). The contumelious treatment of our Lord by the servants and underlings in the Hall of Caiphas, during the night, after the assembly broke up (67-68). The triple denial of our Lord by Peter, his sorrow and repentance (69-75).

TEXT.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had ended all these words, he said to his disciples:

2. *You know that after two days shall be the pasch, and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified:*

3. *Then were gathered together the chief priests and ancients of the people into the court of the high-priest, who was called Caiphas:*

4. *And they consulted together, that by subtilty they might apprehend Jesus, and put him to death.*

5. *But they said: Not on the festival day, lest perhaps there should be a tumult among the people.*

6. *And when Jesus was in Bethania, in the house of Simon the leper,*

7. *There came to him a woman having an alabaster-box of precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he was at table.*

8. *And the disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying; To what purpose is this waste?*

9. *For this might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.*

10. *And Jesus knowing it, said to them: Why do you trouble this woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.*

11. *For the poor you have always with you: but me you have not always.*

12. *For she in pouring this ointment upon my body, hath done it for my burial.*

13. *Amen I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told for a memory of her.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended all these words.*" "*All these words,*" most probably, refer to the preceding discourse (xxiv., xxv.), relative to the Day of Judgment, the destruction of Jerusalem, the necessity of vigilance, and good works, as illustrated in the several foregoing parables. St. Thomas (*in hunc locum*) observes, that "*all these words,*" comprise the entire of our Redeemer's teaching, as contained in the Gospel, so that the Evangelist wishes, according to Him, to convey, that, after our Redeemer had acquitted Himself of the office of teacher, He now prepares for His office of Saviour, and wishes to apprise His disciples, beforehand, of it, in order to secure them against being scandalized at His Passion, by showing them, He foresaw it all beforehand, and endured it, because He willed it. Having heretofore predicted the *manner*, and the *place*, of His death, He here predicts the exact time of it.

2. "*You know,*" as a matter of course, well known to the entire people; or, it might mean, that He Himself had previously informed them of it; "*that*"—according to the strict disposition of the law itself, which He meant to follow—"the Pasch shall be after two days." (In the Greek, it is in the present tense, *γινεται*, "*the Pasch is,*" to denote the certainty of the future event, and the fixed time for celebrating it). This passage furnishes a subject of great doubt and disputation, as to the time when these words were spoken. It is almost universally agreed upon, that they were spoken on the evening of the twelfth moon of the month, *Nisan*, corresponding with our *March*. For, as the Pasch was to be eaten on the evening of the 14th of that month, according to the Jewish law (Exod. xii. 6-18), and the festival which commenced on that evening, was to be celebrated also during the following day, the 15th (for all the Jewish festivals were celebrated from evening till evening), then, as "*two days*" intervened between the time our Redeemer spoke these words, and the evening of the 14th, it follows, clearly, that that evening was the 12th of the month.

But on what day of the *week* did He say these things, is another question. That it was on Tuesday evening, is clearly inferred, from the fact, that our Redeemer's Passion took place on Friday. For, St. Luke (xxiii. 54-56); St. John (xix. 31), inform us, that the day following His Passion was the Sabbath. Moreover, such has been, at all times, the teaching of the Christian Church. Then, as our Redeemer, as is clear from the Gospel history, celebrated the Paschal feast on the preceding evening, of the 14th *Nisan*, at the time the Paschal festival of the following day (the 15th *Nisan*) commenced, on which day He was crucified, it follows, that the words were spoken on Tuesday evening, between which and the evening of Thursday, two days intervened. The same is inferred, from the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which happened on Sunday, as the Catholic Church has always taught. Now, as the Paschal solemnity was to be on Friday, commencing, as all Jewish festivals did, on the preceding evening, it follows, as the words were spoken, "*two days*" before, that it must have occurred on Tuesday.

St. John says, our Redeemer came to Bethania "*six days before the Pasch.*" The Pasch commenced on Thursday evening, the 14th *Nisan*. On that evening, the

Pasch lamb was immolated and consumed. Hence, our Lord, most probably, came to Bethania on the previous Friday, where great multitudes came to see Him, after having raised Lazarus from the dead (John xii. 9), and rested there, on account of the Sabbath, on which day the people could not cut down branches, or make the intended public demonstration. On the evening of Saturday, after the feast of the Pasch was over He was entertained at supper, at "*the house of Simon the leper*," on which occasion, His feet were anointed (John xii. 3, &c.; Matt. xxvi. 6). "*The next day*," that is, the day after the supper, which, indisputably, was Sunday (John xii. 12), He entered Jerusalem in triumph.

The series of events, in which our Lord was engaged, from Friday, the day of His arrival in Bethania, till Thursday evening, on which commenced the Paschal festival of the following day, whereon He died, was as follows:—On Friday, 8th Nisan, He came to Bethania, and rested there, on account of the Sabbath. 9th Nisan, which terminated on Saturday evening, He supped at "*the house of Simon the leper*," late on that evening, after the close of the Sabbath. The day after this supper—Palm Sunday—10th Nisan, He entered Jerusalem in triumph (John xii. 12), and retired to Bethania, for the night. On Monday morning, 11th Nisan, He cursed the barren fig-tree, on His way back to Jerusalem, where He cast the profane traffickers out of the temple, and returned for the night to Bethania. On Tuesday morning, 12th Nisan, on His way back to Jerusalem, the disciples express their surprise at seeing the barren fig-tree utterly withered, which, probably, escaped them the evening before, on account of the darkness. After delivering lengthened discourses in the temple, on that day, our Lord, leaving the temple, predicts the ruin of the city; and, sitting on Mount Olivet, He answers the questions of the Apostles, regarding the threatened destruction of Jerusalem, and the final end of all things. The two days before the Pasch, commence on this evening of Tuesday. After spending the night on Mount Olivet (Luke xxi. 37, 38), as was His wont, He goes to Jerusalem the next day, Wednesday, 13th Nisan. The Council is held there, for the purpose of destroying Him. Judas covenants with the Chief Priests, to betray Him for a fixed price. Our Lord repairs that evening, as usual, to Bethania, and spends the night there. It is not likely, that He came to Jerusalem early the following day, 14th Nisan, as, in the afternoon, He sent in two of His disciples to prepare the Pasch, whom He Himself soon followed, with the other Apostles, in order to celebrate it at the evening hour, appointed by the Jewish law, for eating the Paschal lamb (Exod. xii. 6). At sunset of this 14th day of the month Nisan, commenced the first day of Azymes. The festival of the following day always commenced, according to the Jewish computation of festivals, on the preceding evening. On that night, our Lord celebrates the Pasch; institutes the Blessed Eucharist; goes to Gethsemani; is apprehended, and brought before the assembled Sanhedrin. The following morning, the 15th Nisan—the Paschal solemnity—He is brought again before the Sanhedrin, who send Him to Pilate, by whom He is condemned to the death of the cross, crucified at mid-day, and buried before sunset. If we bear in mind the Jewish calculation of their festivals, viz., from the sunset of the day preceding the festival, till the sunset of the festival day itself, we can easily reconcile the apparent discrepancy between Matthew (v. 17), Mark (xiv. 22), Luke (xxii. 7), who all concur in saying, that our Lord celebrated the Pasch on the first day of Azymes, and St. John (xiii. 1), who says, it was celebrated the day before. Both accounts are true. It was the evening before, according to the civil computation of time, which St. John, who wrote sixty years after this, when the Jewish law and Jewish usages had passed away, most likely adopted. But, according to

the sacred, or festival computation, which alone the three other Evangelists attended to, the evening before formed a part of the following festival day. The Pasch was celebrated "*between the two evenings*" of Thursday and Friday (v. 20). Hence, as our Lord, who was observant of "*all justice*," could not be supposed to have anticipated the usual and prescribed time for celebrating the Pasch, the error of the Greeks, who maintained He did not celebrate it in unleavened bread, is clearly refuted.

A question, much debated, is raised here, viz., whether our Lord celebrated the Pasch on the same day with the Jews. That He celebrated it at the time, and in the manner, marked out in the law of Moses (Exod. xii. 6), seems quite clear, from the words of the Evangelists, Matthew (xxvi. 2-17, 18); Luke (xxii. 7-13), where our Lord speaks of "*the Pasch*," manifestly in the ordinary acceptation of the term, embracing the prescribed time, and all the ceremonies connected with it. But, whether the Jews also celebrated it, on this occasion, on the day appointed by law, the evening of the 14th Nisan, is disputed. Some distinguished commentators hold, that they postponed it one day; that, instead of celebrating it on the evening of Thursday, they put it off till the evening of Friday, and that Saturday, the 16th Nisan, was, in this year, the day on which they kept the Paschal solemnity. These writers say, that the Jews were warranted, by a tradition handed down from their fathers, since the Babylonish captivity, in transferring the celebration of the Pasch, whenever it fell on Friday, to the following day, Saturday, in order to avoid the great inconveniences resulting from the celebration of two festivals, in immediate succession. Rupertus, Paulus Brugensis, Petavius, &c., quote the tradition referred to. But, they have failed to prove its existence, and it is stated by others, that the custom referred to was of a date subsequent to the death of our Divine Redeemer. It seems, however, to be the far more probable opinion, that the Jews celebrated the Pasch on the day marked out by law, the same with that on which it was kept by our Divine Redeemer. This is expressly stated by St. Mark (xiv. 12). For, he tells us, our Redeemer sent His disciples to prepare the Pasch, "*on the first day of the unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Pasch.*" A further proof that our Lord and the Jews celebrated the Pasch on the same day, is derived from the account given by the four Evangelists of the liberation of Barabbas, shortly before our Lord was condemned to death by Pilate. The Governor was wont to release, at the request of the people, a prisoner, whomsoever they demanded. This always happened on the festival day (Matt. xxvii. 15). St. Mark says, the people demanded this, as a matter of course, on *the festival*; and St. John expressly states (xviii. 39), that the feast day on which the custom of having a prisoner released, was "*the Pasch.*" They, therefore, celebrated the Pasch on the day of our Lord's crucifixion; and hence, they must have partaken of the Paschal supper on the preceding evening, as did our Blessed Lord.

The objections against this opinion are—1st. St. John, who must clearly refer to the Last Supper (see Patrizzi, Lib. iii. Diss. 1.), says, it took place "*before the festival day of the Pasch*" (xiii. 1). This has been already answered. St. John, who wrote sixty years after this, followed, not the Jewish computation of festival days, from sunset till sunset; but, the Greek or Roman computation of days, from midnight to midnight. The same Apostle gives proof that in his Gospel he sometimes follows the Roman computation of time (xii. 12; xx. 19). 2ndly. It is supposed in the account given by St. John (xviii. 28), of the accusation preferred by the Jews against our Lord, on the day of His death, before the tribunal of Pilate, that they had not then eaten the Pasch, and that, therefore, they had put it off till the evening of that day, whereas our Redeemer had eaten it the evening before. "*They went not*

into the Hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch." *Answer.* This supposes what is not exactly correct, viz., that the word, *Pasch*, exclusively refers to the *Paschal lamb*, eaten on the first day of Azymes. Moses himself (Deut. xvi. 2, 3), applies the term to victims of sheep and oxen, "*sacrificabis Phase Domino Deo tuo oves et boves.*" From the pages of the Talmud, it appears, that the word, *Pasch*, in the usual language of the Jews, applied, besides the *Paschal lamb*, to the other victims, which were eaten on the 15th of Nisan, the first day of Azymes, and the night following (Patrizzi, *ibidem*). That it did not apply to the *Paschal lamb*, in the passage quoted from St. John, is clear from this, that the slight uncleanness the Jews would contract by entering Pilate's Hall (they seemed to have no scruple whatever regarding the grievous crime of co-operating in the death of a just man), could be easily removed by an evening purification. Hence, there must be reference to some other victims, of which they were to partake before the time of evening lustrations (Patrizzi). 3rdly. We find several acts performed on the day of our Lord's crucifixion, in connexion with our Lord's death, which could not be performed on a festival day, such as His arrest, His trial, His crucifixion. Again, we find Joseph of Arimathea and the holy women, after our Lord's body was taken down from the cross, buying fine linen, and making other preparations for His burial, which would not be allowed on a festival day. *Answer.* There is no proof that the acts performed preparatory to our Lord's death, were against the letter of the law, at least, as regards a festival day. The heads of the Jewish Church themselves, who were very anxious to carry out the provisions of the law, at least externally, did not seem to think these acts were prohibited. All they were concerned about was, not the violation of the law, but, lest His arrest should cause "*a tumult among the people*" (Matt. xxvi. 5). The same answer applies to the acts performed by Joseph of Arimathea, and the holy women. The Sabbatical rest was more strictly enforced than that on festivals. In reference to the latter, servile work, necessary for the preparation of food, was allowed. (Exod. xii. 14-20; xxiii. 14, &c.; Lev. xxiii. 6; Num. xxviii. 16, &c.) But, no such exception extended to the ordinary Sabbath rest. However, even on the Sabbath, the bodies of those who suffered the penalty of death should be buried (Deut. xxi. 23), and this injunction or concession must include everything necessary for this purpose, such as the act of buying spices, referred to in the Gospel. 4thly. St. John calls the Sabbath immediately following our Lord's crucifixion, "*a great Sabbath day*," "*erat enim magnus dies ille Sabbati*" (xix. 31), which supposes the solemnity of the Pasch to be added to the ordinary Sabbath. *Answer.* The very fact of its falling within the octave of the Pasch, would warrant the Evangelist in calling it a great Sabbath (see xii. 1). 5thly, St. John (xix. 14), says, the day of our Lord's crucifixion was "*the parascève of the Pasch*," which looking to the strict meaning of the word, "*parascève*," *preparation*, means, "*it was the preparation of the Pasch.*" Hence, the Pasch was observed on the following day. *Answer.* The word "*parascève*," if we look to etymology, signified preparation; if we look to usage, commonly signified, the sixth day of the week; this St. Mark expressly says of it (xv. 42), "*because it was the Parascève, that is, the day before the Sabbath.*" The same meaning of the word is insinuated by St. John (xix. 31), "*that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day.*" Hence, the phrase means, it was "*the Parascève*," or sixth day of the week, within which week was celebrated the Pasch, just as we term the Friday after Easter, *Feria 6^{ta} Paschatis*, that is to say, Friday within Easter week; and in the three passages of St. John's Gospel, where the word, *parascève* (*παρασκευή*), is employed, viz. (xix. 14, 31, 42), the article is omitted in the two first, to show, it was meant to express, not *preparation*, but to express the day of the week; whereas, in verse 42, the article shows it means, *preparation*; not, however, the pre-

paration of the Pasch ; but, of the succeeding Sabbath, the common acceptation of the term. It is needless to dwell on any other objections against the opinion we advocate. The arguments in proof of it are far stronger than the objections against it.

"*After two days shall be the Pasch.*" The word, "*Pasch*," signifies, a *passing over*, and contains an allusion commemorative of the occasion, when the destroying angel in Egypt smote the Egyptians, and *passed over* the houses of the Hebrews, the jambs of whose doors were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, slain on the occasion (Exod. xii. 1)—hence, the term, *Passover*. It is frequently employed to denote—1st. The Paschal lamb, slain according to law (Exod. xii. 6), on the evening of the 14th of the month, Nisan, the first month with the Jews, corresponding with our March (Exod. xii. 21 ; Deut. xvi. 2 ; Luke xxii. 7 ; Matt. xxvi. 17 ; Mark xiv. 12 ; 1 Cor. v. 7). 2ndly. The solemnity itself, as here, and Mark xiv. 1 ; Luke xxii. 1. 3rdly. Other victims, which were offered up with the Paschal lamb, but after a different rite, as peace offerings (Deut. xvi. 2 ; 2 Paralip. xxxv. 7-9, 13).

"*And the Son of man shall be delivered,*" &c. "*The Son of man.*" It is quite usual with our Lord to speak of Himself in the third person, and call Himself "*the Son of man* ;" as if to convey to us, that, although the Son of God from eternity, He has still humbled Himself for us, by taking upon Himself the true nature of man, in which alone He could have become a Redeemer for us ; and that He has taken upon Himself, for our sakes, all the infirmities and ills of weak human nature, sin excepted.

"*Shall be delivered,*" most likely, refers to the treason of Judas, as He refers to a particular time—" *after two days,*" &c.—in the foregoing. St. Thomas and Origen observe, that our Redeemer was delivered by His Father, and by Himself, in order to redeem mankind ; by the devil, in order to incite men to sin, and prevent the work of man's redemption ; by Judas, through avarice ; by the Jews, through envy ; and by Pilate, through fear of losing the friendship of Cæsar.

"*To be crucified.*" If the preceding words refer to Judas, then, in these words is expressed merely the *consequence* of His betrayal. If to the Jews, they express the end or motive ; for, they cried out, "*Crucifige, crucifige eum.*" Our Redeemer conveys, in these words, that the immolation of the true Paschal Lamb is to take place in such a way that the antitype shall fully correspond with its type, by being sacrificed on the same day, freely and voluntarily selected by Himself for that object.

3. "*Then,*" may refer to the time our Redeemer uttered these words regarding His Passion, or about the time, viz., early on the following (Wednesday) morning, to show the infallible efficacy of the Divine decree, ordaining that our Lord should suffer at the time of the Pasch. The very fact of our Redeemer uttering the prophecy at this time shows, He could not have learned the circumstance from the hostile meeting of the Sanhedrin, which took place afterwards, and whose deliberations were opposed to His being put to death on the day He had fixed upon. "*Then,*" may refer to the Pasch, which was to occur "*after two days,*" and for which, as a joyous and solemn festival, the chief men among the Jews should be preparing, rather than be engaged in plotting against the life of an innocent man. It was in consequence of this Jewish Council, held on Wednesday, to compass our Redeemer's death, that Wednesday was a fast day in the early Christian Church (St. Augustine, Epist. 36 ; Theophylact and Victor Antiochenus, in Marcum xvi. 1, 2).

"*The Chief Priests.*" By these are generally understood, the heads or chiefs of the twenty-four sacerdotal families (1 Par. xv. 6, 7 ; 2 Par. xxiv. 6), according to the arrangements of David, which continued to our Redeemer's time ; or, those who had been High Priests already. For, from the time of Herod, this dignity was not perpetual,

as formerly, but annual; and formed the subject of the most iniquitous traffic, and of the basest venality (see ii. 4).

"*And ancients of the people.*" By these were meant, those whom St. Luke (xxii. 4) calls "*magistrates,*" who ruled in civil matters—a signification in which the Greek word, *σπαρταγγοι*, is often employed in SS. Scripture. (Acts iv. ; xvi. 20, &c.) These were generally Pharisees (Josephus, Lib. 18 Antiq.) The Greek text has here, "*and the Scribes.*" So also have Mark and Luke, as if to convey to us, that in this assemblage, the different orders in the State—Chief Priests, Doctors of the Law, and Judges, were represented. The words mean: that the *Sanhedrim*, composed of the different orders, which, presided over by the High Priest, was the supreme tribunal among the Jews, appointed to judge doctrinal questions, and sit in judgment on false prophets, had been assembled on this occasion.

"*Into the Court of the High Priest,*" that is, the Court or Hall of the High Priest's house, where such assemblies usually took place. It may be used by *synecdoche* for the house itself, denoting a mansion or palace. While there were several chiefs of Priestly families, there was but one High Priest. His name was "*Caiphas,*" whom Josephus represents as infamous for his avarice and bad qualities, by which he worked his way to the office of High Priest (Lib. 18, Antiq. c. 3, 6). It is most likely, that this assembly was convoked by him, who, from his office, far from stimulating men to the perpetration of injustice, should be the first to warn them against it.

4. "*They consulted together,*" not what preparation they should make for the coming solemn festival; but, "*that by subtilty,*" that is, how they could privately, without the knowledge of the people, who, they feared, would rescue Him; or, without any anticipation on the part of Jesus Himself, who might escape from them, and elude their grasp, as He did on former occasions. "*They might apprehend Jesus, and,*" after having seized Him, "*put Him to death.*" They had already determined on His death; nay, the Pontiff of that year had declared this to be a just measure of necessary precaution and public safety. But, the question now deliberated among them was, how this could be safely and effectually brought about. "*They feared the people,*" as we are informed by St. Luke (xxii. 2), if they were to attempt anything publicly against Him. Hence, their deliberation, regarding the mode of apprehending and putting Him to death; and their resolve that it should not occur on the festival day.

5. "*Not on the festival day,*" that is, either on the first day of the Pasch, or the following days; but, that His arrest should be either anticipated, as is held by some: or, postponed, as the words are interpreted by others, till after the seven days of the Paschal solemnity had expired. "*Lest there should be a tumult among the people.*" who assembled from every part of Judea, on the occasion of the Paschal solemnity. Among this assembled multitude, there were many of our Redeemer's own countrymen from Galilee—many who received benefits at His hands, cures of their bodily distempers, many, whose hunger He miraculously appeased in the desert—many, who regarded Him as a holy man and a prophet. The enemies of our Divine Redeemer, therefore, calculated, that if any violence were resorted to against Him on this public occasion, when it was usual to release and pardon malefactors, the multitude, who, as we learn from Josephus (Lib. Antiq. 20), were prone to tumults, which caused the Roman Governor to station a body of soldiers near the temple, would resent it, and rescue Him out of their hands, and, perhaps, maltreat themselves. Hence, they resolve that the apprehension and death of our Redeemer should either precede the Paschal

solemnity, or be postponed till after it. But, the designs of God are not to be frustrated by human machinations. The true Paschal Lamb was to have suffered on the Paschal solemnity, according to the decrees of God. Hence, it came to pass, that the High Priests, &c., changing their minds, availed themselves of the unexpected opportunity presented to them, by the treason of Judas, for His apprehension; and, forgetful of the sacredness of the Paschal solemnity, imbrued their hands in His blood; while the multitude, whom they dreaded, seconding their efforts, called for His crucifixion, and invoked His innocent blood on their own heads, and those of their children; so, that the designs of God, and the consequent predictions of our Redeemer, regarding the day, the hour, the place, and manner of His death were fulfilled to the letter.

6. "*And when Jesus was in Bethania,*" &c. The anointing of our Saviour, described here, occurred some days before the above words were spoken. It occurred, as we are informed by St. John (xii. 1), "*six days before the Pasch,*" and before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But, as SS. Matthew and Mark had omitted referring to it in its proper place and order, they introduce it here *after* the description of our Lord's public entry, because the anointing of our Redeemer, and the profusion and expense incurred, served as the occasion of suggesting to the avaricious Judas, the idea of betraying Him for money. Our Lord frequently stopped at Bethania, the native village of Martha and Mary, at the foot of Mount Olivet. On the present occasion, He was entertained by "*Simon,*" called "*the leper,*" either from having been himself infected with leprosy, of which he was now cured; or, it may have been a cognomen of his family.

7. "*There came to Him a woman, having an alabaster box,*" &c. This box was made of alabaster, or rather, of some fragile substance like it. St. Mark (xiv. 3) says, she poured out the ointment, "*breaking the alabaster box,*" which might be understood, of breaking the narrow neck of the fragile flask, in which such perfumes were usually kept. It was "*precious,*" of great value, both in regard to the quality, and, also, the quantity, which, St. John tells us, was "*a pound.*" A pound weight of this ointment was worth "*three hundred pence,*" or denarii, which amounted to a large sum. St. Mark (xiv. 3) and St. John (xii. 3) tell us, it was the ointment "*of spikenard.*" The valuable extract or perfume of the roots of this aromatic Eastern plant, was highly prized by the ancients, and much used at feasts and baths. Both St. John and St. Mark call it, *νάρδον πιστικῆς*. The meaning of the latter term is much controverted. Some understand *pistici*, to mean, *genuine, unadulterated*, the sense attached to the word in our English version (John xii. 3), "*right spikenard.*" Others, more probably, deriving it from a different root, give the meaning of, *potable, liquid*, to distinguish it from the spikenard ointment, which is of a more solid description.

But, *who* the "*woman*" was, is a subject of much controversy. It seems, the more probable opinion, that, although the anointing described by St. Luke (vii. 37, &c.), is different from that described here by St. Matthew, and by Mark (xiv.), John (xii.);—for, the former occurred two years before our Redeemer's death; the latter, only a few days before it—still, the female referred to on both occasions is Mary Magdalen, the sister of Lazarus and Martha (John xi.) For, in speaking of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, St. John (xi. 2) describes her as the person "*who anointed the Lord with ointment,*" &c., which could hardly be assigned, as a peculiar designation of Mary Magdalen, had any other woman done the same; and, although she is described by St. Luke (vii. 37) as a "*sinner,*" and would seem to be represented

by the other Evangelists as a saint; still, as they refer to different periods, it only shows she gave up her previous sinful life, and returned to God by penance. The difference in the mode of anointing—she having been represented on one occasion as anointing His feet; on another, His head—proves nothing; as, on the occasion when she is described as anointing His feet, it is to be presumed, she also did what was usual on such occasions, viz., anointed His head. This our Redeemer insinuates, when addressing Simon (Luke vii. 46), He says, “*My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed*”—not only My head, but, also—“*My feet*.” That Matthew, Mark, and John refer to the same anointing, although there may be some apparent trivial discrepancy as regards the days, is clear, from the perfect concurrence of almost all the circumstances—the place (Bethania); the kind of oil; the murmuring of Judas—our Redeemer’s approbation of the act. For, how could the same charge be so soon repeated by the traitor, within four days after the severe rebuke of our Saviour on the same subject? St. John particularizes the female, viz., Mary, the sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead; because, his object was, as he follows the order of time, to describe more particularly this occurrence; whereas, Matthew and Mark merely call her “*a woman*,” because they merely incidentally refer to this unction as introductory to the treason of Judas, of which it was the occasion. St. John does not say, that this supper took place in the house of Lazarus; he only says (xii. 2), “*they made Him a supper there*,” viz., Bethania, in what house, he does not say. He rather insinuates, that it was not at the house of Lazarus; for, he says, “*Lazarus was one of them that sat at table*,” which would be hardly a matter to be recorded, if the supper was given at his own house; nor would it be deserving of special record, that Martha and Mary served, if it was at their own house. The other Evangelists say expressly, it was “*at the house of Simon the leper*.”

8, 9. “*The disciples seeing it*” (St. Mark (xiv. 4) has, “*some*” of them, which is perfectly reconcilable with St. Matthew; St. John xii. 4, says, “*one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot*”), which may be easily explained, by a figure quite common in SS. Scripture, which employs the plural for the singular; thus, it is said, the *thieves* on the cross blasphemed Him, while only *one* did so. Or, it may be more probable, as St. Augustine explains it (Lib. 2 de Consensu. Evangel.), that Judas, having first expressed his indignation, the other Apostles, who knew our Redeemer’s austere manner of life, and His unbounded charity to the poor, then joined in expressing feelings of indignation, but from different motives—Judas from avarice (John xii. 6); they, from charity. This mode of explaining the passage, derives probability from the words which St. John subjoins: “*Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor; but, because he was a thief*,” &c. Our Redeemer’s rebuke is addressed, not to one, but to all. St. Mark and St. John say, it was worth “*more than three hundred pence*,” which shows the ungrudging liberality of the woman towards Him. The value of a penny, or denarius, among the ancients, was considerable. We are informed by Tacitus (Annal. i. 17), it was more than the daily pay of a Roman soldier.

10. “*Jesus knowing it*.” In virtue of His Divine knowledge, He knew their private murmurings, addressed directly to the woman; but indirectly, levelled at Himself, for having permitted such waste, although these murmurings did not reach His ear. “*Said to them*.” He does not harshly rebuke their indiscreet murmuring; nor does He expose the avarice of Judas, nor his affected concern for the poor; but, mildly, wishing to teach them to bear with those who err not from malice, He

undertakes the defence of the woman. "*Why do you trouble this woman?*" by your rash and unfounded accusations. "*For, she hath wrought a good work upon Me,*" a work dictated by humanity, gratitude, the firmest faith, the most ardent love towards the Son of God. "*Upon Me,*" towards Me, whom it must be far more praiseworthy and meritorious to serve than the poor. He next answers their objections or grounds of murmuring.

11. For, as regards the poor, for whom you seem so much concerned, the world shall always abound with them, so that you shall never want an opportunity of relieving them; but, as I am to be put to death in a few days, and although I shall be always with My Church, and My immensity ever fills the heavens and the earth; still, I shall not be amongst you in a visible, corporal appearance, and in mortal flesh, so as to be an object of bodily relief. Those, therefore, that are disposed to show Me kindness, during the short period of my visible stay here below, should not be interfered with.

12. "*For she in pouring this ointment,*" &c. This, He adds, to convey to them the near approach of His death; and He assigns this, also, as an excuse for her anointing Him. He might have excused her, or praised her act, on several grounds—on the ground of the excellence of His Divine Person—as this act of honour was exhibited to His own Divine Person, which it was more meritorious to serve and honour than the poor, however numerous or indigent—also, on the ground of her strong devoted affection and the praiseworthy motives of gratitude, humility, piety, &c., from which this act had proceeded. Passing over these, He confined Himself to this, viz., that by anticipation, she had shown that devotion and respect to Him, still alive, but, however, on the point of death, which it would be regarded as praiseworthy in her to have shown Him when dead. The Jews usually embalmed and anointed the bodies of their dead (John xix. 40), to show their affection, to preserve them from corruption, and in testimony of their faith in the future resurrection. Our Redeemer, then, wishes to convey, it was not from motives of pleasure or luxury, to which He was so averse during life, that either He was influenced in permitting the anointing, or she in performing it. But, that it was simply meant to be an anticipated act of funereal respect, which she would not be permitted to show when He was dead. He knew well, she could not anoint Him after His death; because, owing to circumstances, she could not approach Him, and Joseph and Nicodemus would have anticipated her. His resurrection, also, was to have occurred so soon, that she would hardly have time. Hence, He permitted her to do beforehand, not as a matter of luxury, but as a duty of piety, what she would, but could not, have done after His death. This is conveyed (Mark xiv. 8), when He says, she, as it were, by anticipation, anointed His body for burial. This is also conveyed by St. John, when He says, "*Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of My burial,*" that is, allow her to use the ointment for the purpose for which she has kept it, viz., against the day of My burial, which, knowing to be nigh at hand, she has anticipated. Our Redeemer here tacitly contrasts her anxiety, to preserve His body, with that of the murmuring Judas, who contemplated and projected in his mind, to destroy Him. It is disputed, whether Mary Magdalen had really intended in her mind, from a full knowledge and belief in our Saviour's approaching death, and the difficulty of anointing Him, to do so by anticipation; or, whether she merely acted from feelings of love and gratitude, without any reference to His death, the Holy Ghost impelling her to do so, unconsciously on her part, but intended by Him to have reference to our Lord's death, after which she could not

anoint Him. Just as Caiphas uttered a prophecy, unconsciously; so, she acted a prophetic part, without being conscious of it.

By some, it is held that she fully intended this anointing in anticipation of His death, and the honour, then, due to Him, which she knew she could not show; and that our Redeemer had communicated to her the knowledge of His approaching death—to her, whose faith was, doubtless, as strong as that of her sister, Martha, who proclaimed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God (John xi. 27). And this derives confirmation from the words of the Angel to the holy women, among whom was Magdalen (Luke xxiv. 6, 7).

Others say, it is most likely, that Magdalen merely acted from feelings of love and gratitude; but, that the Holy Ghost intended it to be an act of anointing His body beforehand, and from this intention of the Holy Ghost, our Redeemer derives an argument to excuse or commend her act.

13. Our Redeemer opposes to the censure of Judas, the praise and commendation of the entire world. He insinuates, that "*this Gospel*," the message of salvation through Christ, and the history of His life and Passion on earth, shall be preached throughout the entire world, embracing Gentile as well as Jew. What she did, shall be also spoken of, or proclaimed, "*for a memory of her*," that is, in commemoration of her having done this thing, viz., out of love and affection for Me, meant also by the Holy Ghost to be a prophetic anticipation of My approaching death. Hence, the praiseworthy excellence of this act, which caused the avaricious Judas to murmur.

TEXT.

14. *Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests,*

15. *And said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver.*

16. *And from thenceforth he sought opportunity to betray him.*

COMMENTARY.

14. "*Then*," may have no reference whatever to time, and may simply mean, that on account of this tacit reproach, addressed to him by our Redeemer, while defending the act of the woman, and seeing all hopes of securing the price of the precious ointment baffled, Judas, out of a spirit of revenge, and blinded by avarice, resolved to betray Him. Or, if "*then*" refers to time, it has reference to what is recorded (v. 3), the intermediate account of the anointing of our Saviour's feet, being merely parenthetically introduced.

"*One of the twelve*," shows the magnitude of his guilt and ingratitude, since it was not even one of the seventy-two disciples; but, one of His constant companions, a member of His own family, whom He destined to be one of the future pillars of His Church. This circumstance, however, rendered him a fit instrument for betraying our Lord, as being well acquainted with His domestic habits, His going out and coming in.

"*Who was called Judas Iscariot*." He mentions his name, "*Judas*," to save the character of the other Apostles. "*Iscariot*," to distinguish him from Jude, the author of the Catholic Epistle (John xiv. 22).

"*Went*," spontaneously, of his own accord; "*the devil having entered into him*" (Luke xxii. 3), instigating him, and acting on his blind passions and perverted will, urged him on to this mad act. St. John more clearly expresses it (xiii. 2), "*the devil put it into the heart of Judas . . . to betray Him*."

"*To the Chief Priests,*" to which St. Luke adds, "*and to the magistrates*" (xxii. 4). This refers to the meeting mentioned (v. 3). Very likely, he went into Jerusalem, on Wednesday morning, under pretext of some business, and hearing of the assembly of the High Priests, &c. (v. 3), he conjectured what the cause of their meeting was, for, he knew that "*the Pharisees and High Priests gave a command, that if any one knew where our Lord was, he should tell, in order that they might apprehend Him*" (John xi. 56).

15. "*And he said to them,*" &c. It is most likely, that Judas, before making the base offer of betraying his Master, made some charge against Him, in order to palliate his own treachery, and to make it appear that he was himself trustworthy, such as allowing Himself the luxury of having His head and feet anointed, to which he may have added other charges, not recorded by the Evangelists.

"*What will you give me?*" &c. These words are interpreted by some (among the rest, St. Jerome), to convey, that Judas regarded our Redeemer of such little value, as to leave it to themselves to give what they pleased; that he would receive any price for Him. Others understand the words to mean, that Judas wished to know, if they meant to give a suitable, a sufficiently large price for Him; and, that he would betray Him, if they meant to compensate him as was fit for them to do. "The wretch," says St. Jerome, "wished to indemnify himself for the loss of the price of the ointment, by the price of his Master." He is so blinded by avarice, that he merely bargains for the money, regardless of how they would afterwards treat his Master. So blinded, that he forgets every feeling of humanity, gratitude, friendship; nay, the omniscience and omnipotence of Jesus, of which he had already witnessed so many proofs. "*They appointed him,*" which some understand to mean, measured out to him, actually gave him. Others, more probably; they promised to give, they covenanted with him for, "*thirty pieces of silver.*" There is a diversity of opinion as to the precise value of this sum. It is, however, generally maintained, that whenever there is mention of ἀργύριον (*argenteus*, Vulgate) in the New Testament, it means, the Jewish silver *sicle*, which was equivalent to the Greek *stater*, and was equal to two didrachmas, or four Attic drachmas. Hence (Exodus xxi. 32), for "*thirty sicles of silver,*" according to the Hebrew reading, the Septuagint have, "*thirty didrachmas of silver,*" the price of a slave among the Jews (Exodus xxi. 32). The value of a "*silver piece,*" or *sicle*, was something about 2s. 6d. of our money. Hence, the price set on our Redeemer was something under £3. 15s. of our money, the price of a common slave. This sum, though small, was still, considering the increased value of money in these early days, sufficient to purchase the potter's field (xxvii. 7). It is probable, this field was in a most wretched condition, the best part of the soil having been taken away from it. Moreover, its extent is not stated in SS. Scripture, nor is it said, that this sum was exclusively appropriated to the purchase.

16. "*From thenceforth*"—this happened on Wednesday morning—"he sought an opportunity," both as to time and place, "*to betray Him*" into the hands of His enemies. Instigated by the spirit of avarice, he watched our Redeemer, when, on the following (Thursday) night, he proceeded to the garden of Gethsemani, and there found the desired opportunity of privately betraying Him, and thus securing the price of innocent blood. Base ingratitude of Judas; yet, how often may not we have sold the Son of God, not once, but hundreds of times, and handed Him over to the devil, not for even thirty crowns, but for a base, brutal passion. Hence, when contemplating the perfidy of Judas, and viewing with horror all its circumstances, we may justly apply to ourselves the words of Nathan to David, "*Thou art the man*" (2 Kings

xii. 7). For, we are assured by the Holy Ghost, that as often as we commit mortal sin, which does not so much as gain us thirty pieces of silver, "*we crucify again the Son of God, and make a mockery of Him.*" (Heb. vi.) How frequently should we not exclaim from the bottom of our hearts, and in a truly penitential spirit, "*Miserere mei Deus,*" &c. "*Tibi soli peccavi . . . peccatum meum contra me est semper.*"

TEXT.

17. *And on the first day of the Azymes the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the pasch?*

18. *But Jesus said: Go ye into the city to a certain man, and say to him: The master saith, My time is near at hand, with thee I make the pasch with my disciples.*

19. *And the disciples did as Jesus appointed to them, and they prepared the pasch.*

20. *But when it was evening, he sat down with his twelve disciples.*

21. *And whilst they were eating, he said: Amen I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me.*

22. *And they being very much troubled, began every one to say: Is it I, Lord?*

23. *But he answering said: He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me.*

24. *The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but wo to that man, by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed: It were better for him, if that man had not been born.*

25. *And Judas that betrayed him, answering said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him: Thou hast said it.*

COMMENTARY.

17. "*And on the first day of Azymes,*" that is, of unleavened bread, which commenced with the Paschal solemnity, viz., on the evening of the 14th Nisan. On that evening, they should eat the Paschal lamb with unleavened bread (Exod. xii. 8). On that evening commenced the feast of unleavened bread, called also the Feast of the Pasch, which continued seven days. The 14th Nisan is called the first day of Azymes, because the Feast of Azymes, or the Pasch, which was celebrated on the 15th Nisan, commenced, according to the Jewish computation of festivals, from sunset to sunset, on the previous evening of the 14th. Hence, the *first day* of the Feast of Azymes, or Pasch, may be said to be the 14th or 15th Nisan; for, it commenced at sunset of the 14th, and ended at the sunset of the 15th. The feast continued for seven days.

But, as our Lord sent His two disciples into Jerusalem, to prepare the Pasch at an earlier date than that on which the festival of the following day commenced, a question may arise, how could it be said that, at the hour they were sent in, it was the first day of Azymes? The answer commonly given is, that the Jews, as may be seen from their records, were wont to clear their houses of all leaven, early on the 14th, in preparation for the festival; the 14th was, therefore, popularly termed the first day of Azymes, as all leaven was entirely removed from their houses, from an early part of the day.

"*The disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where,*" &c. There is some difference between the narration of St. Luke and that of St. Matthew. The most probable way of reconciling both is, that our Redeemer first, put His disciples in mind, as St. Luke relates (xxii. 8), of preparing for the coming Pasch; and that they, then, asked Him, as is given by the three Evangelists. "*Where wilt Thou, that we prepare for Thee to eat the Pasch?*"

"*The disciples came to Jesus,*" after having been sent for. St. Mark (xiv. 13) says, "*two of His disciples;*" and these, St. Luke (xxii. 8) says, were "*Peter and John.*"

"*Where,*" that is, in what house; for, Jerusalem alone was appointed by law (Deut. xvi. 5, 6, 7), to be the place to which all the Jews should resort for celebrating the Paschal solemnity.

"*Wilt Thou we prepare for Thee the Pasch?*" According to some writers, not the Priests alone, but those also who were deputed by the heads of a family, as Peter and John were deputed here (Luke xxii. 8) by our Lord, were allowed to sacrifice the Paschal lamb at home, to roast it and prepare it for consumption. For this, these writers quote the authority of Philo. Others, more probably, maintain, with Patrizzi (*de Evangeliiis*) that the Priests alone could receive the blood of the victims, and, with it, sprinkle the rim of the altar.

18. "*Goye into the city*"—hence, He was by this time at Bethania—"to a certain man." He points out the man without naming him, on account of the presence of Judas, lest he might prematurely, or in any unseemly way, interrupt the solemnity of the Last Supper. Both St. Mark (xiv.) and St. Luke (xxii.) give a more particular account of the man in question, or rather, of the circumstances, that distinguished him from any other. On entering the city, they were to meet a man carrying a pitcher of water; they should follow him into the house he was to enter, and there addressing the master of the house, who was clearly different from the man carrying the water, they were to address him in these words: "*The Master saith, My time is at hand,*" My time for leaving this world, and, after redeeming mankind, and leaving them the most affecting proof of My love, to return to My Father.

"*I will keep the Pasch,*" &c. This He adds, to let him know the number, thirteen, for whom he was to provide suitable accommodation. It is generally supposed, that this man was one of our Saviour's followers. The word "*Master,*" a common designation of our Lord among His followers, would seem to confirm this opinion. There is a tradition, that this was the house of John Mark, the companion of St. Paul and Barnabas, in preaching the Gospel. There, the Apostles lay concealed after our Redeemer's death. There, He appeared to them on the evening of His resurrection. There, they received the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday. Thither, St. Peter repaired after his liberation by the Angel. Some are of opinion, that our Redeemer had previously arranged with him, to celebrate the Pasch in his house. Others seem to think, that there was no such previous arrangement, but that, as our Lord had exerted His power, and shown His dominion in the case of the owner of the ass and the colt, who at once gave them up; so, here also, without any previous concert, and, in order to confirm the faith of His Apostles, He wishes to show His power and authority in influencing the mind of the householder to comply with His wishes.

It seems, that this man made becoming preparation for them, for, "*he had a large dining-room furnished.*" The Greek—*αὐτοῦ*—would imply, in the upper part of the house. This was prepared, either in consequence of a previous understanding with our Redeemer; or, having it prepared already, for some other party, he placed it at once at the service of our Lord.

19. The disciples, viz., Peter and John—his most confidential and intimate friends among the Apostles—went "*and prepared the Pasch,*" that is, got ready everything necessary for eating the Paschal lamb. They had the lamb itself, a male of one year, without blemish, duly sacrificed and prepared, through the intervention

of the Priests, who received the blood of the lamb between the two evenings, sprinkled the altar with it, and placed the victim on the altar, and then returned it to the families who offered it. That this was the rite of sacrifice, we are informed by Josephus (*De Bello*, Lib. 6, c. 1), who tells us, that, in reply to the question of Cestius, regarding the number of Jews who assembled at Jerusalem, the Priests, in order to determine this exactly, as ten persons should partake of each lamb, told precisely the number of lambs sacrificed, which they could not do, unless the lambs were prepared, and the sacerdotal services performed at the stated hour. The Apostles also got ready unleavened bread, and wild lettuces. After the sacrificing of the Paschal lamb, the Jews could not have leaven in their houses for seven days. The use of unleavened bread continued from the evening of the 14th Nisan till the evening of the 21st of the same month (*Exod.* xii. 18).

20. "*Now when it was evening,*" after sunset. The lamb was immolated between the third hour of the day and sunset, but not eaten till after sunset. The Hebrew in *Exodus* (xii. 6) *Ben-arbatim*, which St. Jerome translates, "*ad vesperam*," "*in the evening*," or rather, "*towards evening*," signifies, *between the two evenings*, that is, between the ninth hour, or three o'clock of our day, when the sun begins to decline, and sunset. This time was set apart for sacrificing the Paschal lamb, which corresponds with the hour at which the *true Paschal Lamb* was sacrificed (*Matt.* xxvii. 46). After sunset, "*when it was evening*;" or, as St. Luke has it (xxii. 14), "*when the hour was come, He sat down to eat it with His twelve disciples.*" They constituted His family, who were to eat the Paschal lamb with Him. It is insinuated, that all were present, not excepting the traitor, Judas. We are informed by Philo (*Lib. de Sacrif. Cain and Abel*), that the Jewish Pasch was partaken of by men in a standing posture. The law, however, does not command this, although it implies it (*Exod.* xii. 11). The words of St. Matthew, "*He sat down*," merely convey, that He partook of food, without determining the posture, in which He did so, whether standing or reclining.

Possibly, our Redeemer might have partaken of the Paschal lamb in a standing posture. Others maintain, that He had partaken of the Jewish supper, and other viands, served up on that occasion, in a reclining posture. This is held by St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and others (*John* xiii. 4).

In describing banquets in our day, we commonly say, a man *sat down* to dinner, accommodating ourselves to the ordinary forms of expression, although, in that particular instance, He might have been *standing*, while partaking of it. Calmet (*in hunc locum*) says, the Jews of his day, eat the Pasch in a sitting posture; perhaps, because they regarded a standing posture commanded in *Exodus* (xii. 1) as appertaining only to the first occasion of the institution of the Pasch by Moses. St. Hilary is the only one among the Fathers, who denies that Judas was present. That he was, is clear from *Matthew* xxvi. 21; *Mark* xiv. 18; *Luke* xxii. 21; *John* xiii. 11, 26, 30.

21. St. Luke (xxii. 21), says, these words were used by our Redeemer, not *before*, as here, but *after*, the institution of the adorable Eucharist. And this seems more likely, as our Redeemer would hardly have disturbed the minds of His Apostles before preparing for this solemn supper, by the announcement recorded here. Hence, St. Matthew records the matter here by anticipation. Others, however (St. Augustine, &c.), say, that our Redeemer twice alluded to His betrayal, before the Last Supper, and after it. He alluded to it in a very general way before the Last Supper, not naming the traitor. Then the Apostles, having asked who it was, He, still in a very

indefinite way, describes him to be the party who dipped his hand in the dish with Him (v. 23). This, however, is intended more to show the close intimacy existing, and the consequent aggravated guilt of the traitor, than to determine the person. After that, He institutes the Eucharist, and then declares, the traitor was with Him at the table (Luke xxii. 21; John xiii. 21). Then, St. Peter beckoned to St. John, who was reclining on our Redeemer's breast, to ask who it was; and it was told him in reply, that it was the person to whom He would give bread dipped (John xiii. 26); after which, Judas left to consummate his wickedness.

"*Amen I say to you.*" He premises a solemn asseveration, as the matter seemed so incredible. "*One of you,*" My chosen friends, whom I have thus honoured and exalted, "*will betray Me.*" He often before predicted, that He would be delivered to the Gentiles, &c.; but, it is only now He predicts by whom this was to be done. And this He does, to show them, that He was fully conscious of all that was to happen, and that He was freely to undergo death. He did not expressly name Judas, in order, by this consideration for his feelings, to incline him to repent for the wicked deed he meditated—to teach us, how to act towards occult sinners—and, also, lest the Apostles might lay violent hands on him, in vindicating the honour of their Master.

22. They were very much terrified, from a consciousness of their own weakness, however, and a dread of the secret judgments of God, although not conscious to themselves of any wicked design against their Divine Master, whose assurance, they could not call in question.

23. The same is given (Mark xiv. 20). Our Redeemer still refrains from naming him; and He mentions the circumstance of great intimacy and familiarity, to aggravate the guilt and ingratitude of the party. The mention of "*his hand*" is very significant, as if to say, the hand that is in the dish with Me, the same it is, that shall betray Me. It may be, that in the word, "*dish*," we have the container for the thing contained, so that the words would mean: the man who uses the same food and table with Me, he it is that is to betray Me. This is conformable to the words of the Psalmist (xl. 10), "*qui edebat panes meos,*" &c. (Mark xiv. 18; Luke xxii. 21.) Hence, in this answer, our Redeemer does not say, who is, or who is not to betray Him. He only repeats His former assertion, adding a circumstance implying great familiarity, calculated to aggravate and heighten the guilt of the traitor.

24. Meekness having failed, He now has recourse to threats of punishment, in order to incline him to repentance. "*The Son of man goeth,*" that is, leaving the world, He "*goeth*" to death, of His own free will, and returns to His Father, in accordance with the predictions of the Prophets and the determined decree of Heaven (Luke xxii. 22). But, although immense advantage shall accrue to the human race from My death, and great glory to My Father, still, "*woe,*" eternal torture shall be the fate of the wretch "*by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed.*" He is not, on that account, to be reputed guiltless. Although the human race may profit by it; still, it were better for him, that he were never born, than be tortured for all eternity.

25. The traitor, fearing discovery from his silence, also asked, with the others, and in terms of greater respect, "*Is it I, Rabbi?*" while the others addressed Him, as "*Lord.*" The holy Fathers here express their amazement at the cool effrontery of

Judas. It does not seem likely, that he asked our Redeemer separately from the others, after He said (verse 23), "*he that dippeth his hand*," &c., as the account given here by St. Matthew would seem to indicate; for, otherwise, the Apostles could have clearly seen he was the party alluded to, but, that he asked the question with the others (verse 22). Others, however, are of opinion that Judas asked this question, after our Redeemer intimated to St. John, who it was, by giving him the morsel of bread.

"*He saith: Thou hast said it*"—a mild form of saying: Yes, thou art the man. This is also the signification the words bear when addressed to Caiphas (verse 64), whilst St. Mark says, "*I am He*" (xiv. 62). It is most likely, that our Lord said this, in so low a tone of voice, as to escape the notice of the other Apostles, who were thrown into confusion by the announcement (verse 21). For, we find, that even after our Lord had given a definite sign to St. John, and told Judas, "*quod facis, fac citius*" (John xiii. 27); still, they did not understand what was meant (28, 29).

TEXT.

26. *And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat: This is my body.*

27. *And taking the chalice, he gave thanks: and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this.*

28. *For this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.*

29. *And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.*

30. *And a hymn being said, they went out unto Mount Olivet*

COMMENTARY.

26. Our loving Saviour, now on the point of leaving this world and returning to His father, institutes the adorable Eucharist, in which "He, as it were, pours forth the riches of His Divine love towards men, making a memorial of His wonders." (Concil. Trid. SS. xiii. c. ii.) Speaking of the adorable Eucharist, St. Augustine says: "Although God be omnipotent, He can *do* no more; although infinitely wise, He can *contrive* nothing greater; although infinitely rich, He can *bestow* nothing greater." Every circumstance connected with this adorable institution is calculated to awaken our love and heighten our gratitude towards our loving Saviour in this Divine mystery. *When* did He institute it? The night before His cruel Passion; while men were bent on putting Him to an ignominious death, He was bent on leaving them an antidote of immortality. *For how long?* "*Till He come*" to judgment, that is to say, till the end of the world. *On whom?* "*His delight is to be with the children of men.*" And oh! "*What is man, that He should be* (thus) *mindful of him, or the Son of man that He should* (thus) *visit him?*" Ungrateful man, at all times unmindful of Him, nay, often insulting Him and outraging Him in this Divine institution.

What is the gift bestowed? Himself, on whom the Angels love to look, the joy of the elect for eternity, when they shall behold Him *face to face*, who now conceals Himself under the sacramental veils, lest we should be oppressed with the Majesty of Glory—Himself, who fills heaven and earth, than whom heaven or earth can contain nothing greater.

At what sacrifice does He give Himself? Let the history of the neglect, the profanation, the impiety, shown the adorable Eucharist from its first institution, to the end of time, answer. Should not, therefore, the consideration of these and other circumstances, stimulate us to love with our whole hearts our Blessed Lord in the

adorable Sacrament, to make reparation to His loving heart for all He endured for our sakes, and to proclaim and extol for ever, the boundless dimensions, that is to say, the height, length, breadth, and depth, of that excessive love which made Him annihilate Himself even more than He has done in the mystery of His Incarnation, for our sakes.

"*Whilst they were at supper.*" The Greek, *εσθιόντων αὐτῶν*, means, *whilst they were eating* (as in v. 21). But, as the repast, of which they were partaking at that late hour of the evening, was supper, the Vulgate interpreter conveyed the sense, "*cœnantibus illis.*" From St. Paul, who relates the circumstances, as he was taught by our Lord (1 Cor. xi.), and from St. Luke also, we learn, that it was *after supper*—"after *He had supped*"—that is to say, after both the Jewish Paschal supper and the common supper which succeeded it, He distributed the Blessed Eucharist, in the form or under the species of wine; and as it is by no means likely, that He allowed any interruption in the institution of the Holy Eucharist under both species, as a Sacrament and a Sacrifice; but rather by continuous, uninterrupted acts. instituted it at once; it is, therefore, inferred, that it was *after supper*, this institution, under both species, occurred. But, as the bread and wine employed in the Paschal supper, and common Jewish supper which succeeded it were not removed, and as the Eucharist was instituted while they were sitting at table; hence, St. Matthew says, "*whilst they were at supper,*" or, at the close of the twofold supper referred to, and before the food was removed from the table, the bread and wine which remained being necessary for the new mystery of love which our Lord was about to institute. As the Paschal lamb, eaten according to the prescribed rite, in a standing posture, with wild lettuces, having staves in their hands, &c. (Exod. xii. 8-11), would not satisfy the number of persons, ten at least, who should assemble to partake of it; hence, a common Jewish supper usually succeeded the Paschal, and it was after this common supper, of which our Lord and His Apostles partook, He instituted the adorable Eucharist.

"*Jesus took bread.*" "*Jesus,*" the eternal, consubstantial Son of the Omnipotent God, with whom no word is impossible, "*took bread,*" the unleavened bread, which alone could be in the houses of the Jews, on that and the following days. He made BREAD and WINE, the matter of the Eucharist, to convey to us its effects; for, as bread is the ordinary food of man, and most easily procured; so, is this Divine food intended to nourish our souls; "*for, His flesh is meat indeed,*" &c. (John vi. 56); also, to point out the union of heart and charity which should subsist among His followers, signified by the different grains united in the bread, and the different grapes pressed into the wine (1 Cor. x. 17). He appointed both species, to signify more clearly His Passion, in which His flesh was tortured, and His blood had profusely flowed for us. He also, by sacrificing in bread and wine, showed Himself a Priest, according to the order of Melchisedech, as had been declared, regarding Him, by the Psalmist (Psa. cix.), and He had chosen this matter to prevent our conceiving horror at the idea of our partaking of His flesh and blood. Finally, He had chosen *unleavened* bread, as a symbol of the purity and simplicity which should distinguish His people; leaven signifying hypocrisy and deceit (1 Cor. v. 8; Luke xii. 1). It may be also intended to denote the purity of dispositions we should carry with us, in approaching the adorable Eucharist.

"*And blessed,*" viz., the bread, by invoking over it the Divine power and beneficence, so that it would be rendered fit to be converted into His body. This is clear from the Greek, where it runs thus: "*Taking bread and blessing, He broke,*" &c. The several actions recited here have reference to the bread. Why not, then, the act of benediction, which is nothing more than invoking the power and beneficence of God

upon it, so as to be fitted for the change about to be wrought on it? Our Redeemer did so in regard to the loaves He multiplied, "*benedixit eis*" (Luke ix. 16). St. Paul refers the benediction to the subject matter, "*the chalice of benediction, which we bless,*" &c. (1 Cor. x.) He also tells us, that every creature is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. (1 Tim. iv.) The Church, in her Liturgy, refers the word, "*benedixit,*" to the bread. In pronouncing this word, the Priest is enjoined to make the sign of the cross, over the bread and the chalice.

St. Luke and St. Paul (1 Cor. xi.), has for "*blessed,*" "*gave thanks.*" The Greek for both words is sometimes employed to signify the same thing (1 Cor. xiv. 16). The more probable mode, however, of reconciling both accounts is this: Our Redeemer, first lifting up His eyes to heaven, which He most probably did on this, as on the solemn occasion of other miracles, gave thanks to His Father, as St. Paul and St. Luke relate; and then, blessed the bread, as is fully and circumstantially recorded by the Church in the Canon of the Mass. As there can be no doubt that our Redeemer had given thanks, and pronounced a blessing before the Jewish supper, the circumstance of His doing so now again shows, He is entering on a new supper, and instituting a rite of great importance. "*He gave His Father thanks*" for the great gift He was about to bestow on mankind; and also, because the New Pasch and the consummation of the Old Law were at hand.

It is disputed whether this act of benediction is the same as the consecration. But, the most probable opinion is, that this benediction preceded the consecration. The Council of Trent says, "*post benedictionem panis et vini, suum ipsius corpus illis præbere testatus est.*" (SS. xiii. c. i.) The consecration was effected by the efficacious words, "*HOC EST CORPUS MEUM,*" "*HIC EST CALIX,*" &c., which took place *after* the benediction in question.

He then, "*broke,*" by dividing the one bread into as many parts as there were disciples present; and this, before consecration, as is evident from the narrative of the Evangelists. Some commentators, among the rest, Maldonatus, infer from the fact of all the Evangelists describing this circumstance, as also from the disciples at Emmaus recognizing our Redeemer "*in the breaking of bread*" (Luke xxiv. 35), that He must have employed some peculiar method of doing so. However, this does not necessarily follow. The very reception of the Eucharist might have opened the eyes of the disciples at Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 35). The Church does not follow any such method. The Eucharist, from this circumstance, is termed, "*the breaking of bread*" (Acts ii. 42). From this ceremony, the faithful could understand what was meant, without provoking the blasphemies of unbelievers.

"*And He gave to His disciples,*" the twelve Apostles, not excepting Judas, as almost all the ancient Fathers affirm, his crime being occult, and our Redeemer did not wish to furnish him with any grounds for imbibed or exasperated feelings. Others, however, are of the contrary opinion. They hold that Judas left before our Redeemer instituted the adorable Eucharist. St. Jerome (Ep. 150 ad Hedibiam), tells us our Saviour Himself first received a portion, "*ipse conviva et convivium, ipse comedens et qui comeditur.*" This He did, in order to complete the sacrifice, and also to remove any feelings of horror which the Apostles might conceive, on being invited to partake of His body. It is most likely, He gave His body into the hands of His Apostles, as He did in regard to the chalice, "*take and divide it amongst you*" (Luke xxii. 17), which was the mode of originally administering the body of our Lord. (Tertullian, de Spectaculis; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesi; St. Augustine, Sermo 244, &c.) Afterwards, this discipline was changed, for greater reverence' sake, just as the discipline of administering the Eucharist to those only who were

fasting, was observed, for reverence' sake, from the very Apostolic times, although our Redeemer gave it to His Apostles *after* supper.

"*Take ye and eat,*" shows the use of the gift He was about bestowing on them. It was, that, by partaking of it, they would become one body, and one spirit with Him, altogether identified with Him, "*non tu me mutabis in te, sed tu mutaberis in me*" (St. Augustine).

"*This is My body.*" The causal particle, "*for, this is My,*" &c., which is used in the words of consecration, in the Mass, is understood here, as it is expressed, in reference to His blood (v. 28), "*For, this is My blood,*" &c. His reason for telling them to eat of it is, because, it is His body, regarding which, He told them already (John vi. 54), "*unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man . . . you shall not have life in you,*" and, "*he that eateth My flesh . . . hath everlasting life*" (v. 55).

REAL PRESENCE PROVED.

The Council of Trent (SS. xiii. c. 1), has declared, that these words, "*This is My body,*" &c., used by our Redeemer at the Last Supper, demonstrate the Real Presence of our Lord in the adorable Eucharist. Taken in their literal signification, they clearly prove the Catholic doctrine regarding the real, true, and substantial presence of our Lord in this Divine Institution. Truly, if we suppose that our Lord meant to give His body and blood, as defined by Catholic doctrine, He could not have employed any clearer terms, to convey His meaning, than He has used in the words of institution, as recorded by the three Evangelists, and by St. Paul to the Corinthians. For, taken in the literal sense, they are nothing else than the very expression of Catholic doctrine. This, the Sacramentarians themselves admit; and hence, they resort to all sorts of artful ingenuity to wrest the words to a forced and figurative signification.

They are constrained, by the very usages of language, to admit the proof of Catholic doctrine, contained in the words taken literally. In the ordinary concerns of life, all propositions of this nature, "*this is bread,*" "*this is a man,*" and the like, are understood, of the reality and substance of the object referred to, as clearly as if the words, "*really, substantially,*" were added. Nay, more, a person would expose himself to ridicule, who, in pointing to a man, or a loaf of bread, would say, "*this is REALLY and SUBSTANTIALLY a man,*" &c., because, there is no difference between any object and the reality and substance of that object. By announcing it, one announces its reality and substance. Hence, the words of our Lord, taken literally, declare the reality and substance of His body and blood in the Blessed Eucharist. Now, such being the case, we have a right, without further reasoning, to regard our doctrine as satisfactorily proved. For, we have a right to assume, that our Redeemer meant to be understood, according to the literal meaning of His words, until the contrary is satisfactorily proved. The very announcement of the words, by our Redeemer, "*This is My body,*" establishes the Catholic doctrine. For, we cannot recur to a clearer medium of demonstration, than the fact, that a God of infinite power and veracity has said so. In adopting this line of argument, we are only applying the canon of interpretation of SS. Scripture, handed down in the Church, from the days of St. Augustine, founded, indeed, on common sense, viz., that, in the interpretation of Scripture—the same applies to every other law—we are to understand the words in their plain, obvious signification, unless there be some satisfactory reason to the contrary. Acting on this principle, adopted by Protestants themselves, we have a strict right to insist on interpreting the words of our Lord literally, until they, on whom the onus of proof, or, rather, of disproof devolves, show the contrary. In a word, the bare enunciation of the words of our Lord, proves the

Catholic doctrine; and, until our religious opponents show that His words are to be understood in a sense different from what they naturally convey, we are to look on our doctrine as proved.

Suppose, there were question of the interpretation of an important law case. One party quotes the very words of the law, as expressing his view. Would he not be justified in regarding his opinion proved, by a reference to the very terms of the law, which were identical with his opinion, until the opposite party adduced some satisfactory reason for departing from the natural and received meaning of the words of the law, the more so, if it were well known that a prudent legislator attached vast importance to the point, and was, therefore, extremely careful in wording it? Now, our Redeemer, at the Last Supper, was instituting a sacred rite, the most august Sacrament of the New Law. He was bequeathing His last testament to His Church, with a strict precept to have its provisions continued to the end of time. Are we not, therefore, warranted in regarding His words as spoken literally, and our doctrine, consequently, established, by the bare announcement of the terms, until the contrary is satisfactorily proved?

But, going beyond mere defensive grounds, to which we might confine ourselves, as possessors and inheritors of the dogma of the Real Presence, for 1500 years, until our religious opponents satisfactorily prove that the words of our Divine Redeemer are not to be understood literally; it can be clearly shown, by a positive proof, which shall serve, at the same time, as a principle of solution to all the reasoning of our religious opponents, that the words of our Redeemer must be understood literally, and cannot be understood figuratively, at least in the sense given them by Protestants, to imply, that the sign is put for the thing signified. The words must be understood literally, and cannot bear the interpretation put upon them by our religious opponents, provided the Apostles, at the time our Lord took bread, blessed it, and giving it to them, said, "*This is My body*," were not prepared to regard bread—to which He only vaguely and indistinctly referred by saying, "*this*"—as the sign of His body of which He spoke, but, rather, as really converted into the body by the words of consecration, when the sentence, "*This is My body*," was fully enunciated. The truth of this proposition is clear from the ordinary rules of human language, according to which one is guilty of a falsehood, by saying of the sign, that it is the thing signified, when he is well aware that his hearers regard it, not in quality of sign, but absolutely, without any reference whatever to signification. This can be further illustrated, by the language employed, when there is question of portraits, maps, &c. Why are they called, without any departure from truth, by the names of the men, or the country they represent? Is it not because mankind are prepared to regard them as *signs* of things? But, if we could imagine a case, in which those whom we addressed regarded them as the *reality* referred to, we could not, without being guilty of a falsehood, use the same language, in reference to them, *v.g.*, we could not say of the portrait of St. Paul, that it was St. Paul, if we knew that our hearers, from ignorance, or from any cause whatever, were prepared to regard it as St. Paul in reality, and not as his representation, or figure. And, if this be true in cases where Nature herself has established a connexion, as in the example adduced, it is still more so, in reference to those signs that are strictly arbitrary and conventional. Our Redeemer was well aware of the feelings of His Apostles, at the Last Supper, and of the extent of their knowledge. Hence, if they were not prepared to regard bread, in His hands, as the sign of His body, He could not, with a knowledge of their ideas and feelings, say, as He did say, that it was His body. Now, the Apostles were not so prepared. They could not be prepared to see the connexion of sign and thing signified, where no such connexion or relation ever existed.

No such connexion existed between bread and the body of Christ. There was, certainly, no natural connexion. Nature never made bread the sign of any body, much less of a determinate body, as was the body of Christ. Nor was it such by the conventional agreement of mankind. Bread was never classed by mankind among the things which existed only in quality of signs. Nor was this connexion instituted by our Redeemer Himself. In order to be warranted, at the time He enunciated the proposition, "*This is My body*," in saying so, He should have instituted this connexion beforehand, and apprised His Apostles of the same, unless it really was His body. We have no evidence in SS. Scripture, that He did so. Had He done so, the Scriptures would not have passed over such a circumstance, which was indispensable, as a key to arrive at a just knowledge of one of the most important passages of Divine revelation. Hence, as bread was neither a natural nor a conventional sign of the body of Christ, the Apostles could not regard it as such; and our Redeemer could not, therefore, call it His body, unless it were such in substance and reality.

Furthermore, the Apostles were not only unprepared to regard bread, in the hands of Christ, as the sign of His body; but they were positively prepared for the very contrary. For, on the authority of the Son of God Himself, they believed Him "*as having the words of eternal life*" (John vi. 69), when, twelve months before this date, He promised them that, one day, He would give them His real flesh, as food: "*The bread I will give, is My flesh, for the life of the world*" (John vi. 52). They were, therefore, every day in expectation of the fulfilment of this promise. When, therefore, our Redeemer, on the eve of His Passion, after partaking of the Paschal supper—the last He was to take with them, till they partook of it, after a new rite, in the kingdom of His Father—took bread into His venerable and creative hands, and told them to eat, because it was His body, which was to be delivered for them, must they not, at once, have regarded it as that flesh which He promised them, and which, while others went away incredulous, they believed to be His true flesh? (John vi. 67-71.) Hence, the Apostles, far from being prepared to regard bread, in the hands of Christ, as the *sign* of His body, were, on the contrary, prepared to regard it as His real body, to be rendered such by His omnipotent word. Our Redeemer could not, therefore (unless we impute to Him what would be blasphemous), with His knowledge of the Apostles' ideas and feelings, say of the bread, "*This is My body*," unless it were really rendered such, by His Almighty power, in the words of consecration. The words must, therefore, be taken literally, and so taken, prove the Catholic doctrine.

The principle now explained will fully answer all the objections of Protestants against the proof adduced. In truth, all their objections leave the chief point of the proof untouched. Their whole process of reasoning is founded on the fact, that, in many parts of SS. Scripture, we find it said of the sign, that it is the thing signified. Therefore, our Redeemer could have said of the bread, although a mere sign of His body, "*This is My body*." Now, the conclusion is quite unfounded and illogical, unless to the first proposition be added: In many parts of SS. Scripture, it is said of the sign, that it is the thing signified—in circumstances where neither the hearers nor the readers were prepared to regard it as a sign—(as has been shown, in reference to the Apostles, at the Last Supper); and, then, the proposition is utterly false; because, not a single instance is alleged by our adversaries, in which the readers or hearers were not aware, either from the nature of the subject, or the context, or the expressed declaration of the sacred writer or speaker, that there was question of figurative language; whereas, it is quite otherwise, as has been shown, as regards the words of institution.

Their objection may be fully set at rest for ever, by the following disjunctive, or,

rather, dilemma : The Apostles, on the occasion of the Last Supper, were either well versed in the SS. Scriptures of the Old Testament (the New was yet unwritten), having the examples adduced by our religious opponents before their eyes, and able to reason from them ; or, they were not. If we suppose them not versed in SS. Scripture (and this is their real character before the descent of the Holy Ghost—poor, ignorant, illiterate fishermen, who paid implicit belief to everything uttered by our Divine Redeemer) ; then, the passages alleged in objection were utterly unknown to them, and could, therefore, afford them no key for understanding the words of our Lord figuratively. If we suppose them well versed in Scriptural texts, and able to reason from them ; then the objected passages would only serve to have them understand the words of our Lord literally ; because, in the supposition made, they were fully cognizant that, in the passages alluded to, the language was known to the readers, or hearers, to be figurative. They also saw, that no such intimation was given themselves by our Lord, at the Last Supper, not to speak of His promise, which they believed that He would give them, one day, His real flesh. The conclusion, therefore, they should arrive at, if they had a particle of reflection, was, that His words must be understood literally. In all examples adduced by our religious opponents, the figure, or metaphor, is quite apparent ; as may be seen from several instances, “*I am a vine*,” “*I am the door*,” “*Christ is a lion*,” &c. But, in the words, “*This is My body*,” no figurative meaning could be allowed. For if so, they would present an example of what is called, “*an inverted metaphor*,” which according to the laws of human language, is never allowable. Although, one might say, without impropriety, *Christ is a lion* ; *Christ is a door* ; *Christ is a vine* ; no one could invert the words with any degree of propriety, and say, *a vine is Christ*, much less say, *this vine is Christ* ; *this lion is Christ*. And, in order to be like the words, “*This is My body*,” they should be so *inverted*. It should be borne in mind, in reference to the sacred words, “*This is My body*,” that the word, “*this*,” like every other demonstrative pronoun, refers, in a *general, indistinct* way, to the object present. (“*This is my brother*,” *this is a good man*, &c. ; the pronoun, in a general way, points out what is more distinctly expressed by the attribute.) In the first instance, it denotes bread, but this being a *practical* proposition, it is only when the entire proposition is expressed, that it is verified. So that the words really mean : “*this* (which now is bread) *is* (in the next instance, in virtue of the change effected) *My body*.” The change of the water into wine at Cana, could be quoted as an illustration. Our Redeemer, taking the water, could say, “*This is wine*,” rendered such by the change effected. And although, in the first instance, “*this*,” designated *water* ; still, when the proposition was concluded, owing to the change effected, it designated *wine*. In like manner, God could have said, taking the rib out of which He made the woman, “*this* (rib) is a woman,” having been converted into a woman by His omnipotent word.

It is also to be observed, that there is no figure in any of the words of institution. Surely, none in “*this*,” nor in the verb “*is*,” which, being a most simple verb, into which all other verbs are resolvable, never has a figurative meaning in any language ; since it merely denotes existence and a connexion between the subject and attribute of a proposition. Nor in the words, “*My body*,” since the words are added, “*which is given for you*” (Luke xxii. 19) ; “*which shall be delivered for you*” (1 Cor. xi. 24) ; this was His real body. It is to be observed, as regards the form recorded by St. Paul, that the words, “*which shall be delivered for you*,” are used in the present tense in most Greek copies, *κλωμενον*, “*which is broken*,” having reference, in a certain sense, to His death on the cross. Hence, on account of the certainty and proximity of His death, the present may be regarded as having a future signification ; and it is so

rendered, "*shall be delivered for you*" (1 Cor. xi. 24). However, although this is to a certain extent true, if it be borne in mind, that the body given and delivered at the Last Supper, was identical with that delivered on the cross; still, the present signification is most likely to be the one primarily intended by our Lord. For, He speaks of His body, *broken* for them, which could not refer to the cross, on which it was predicted His body was not to be *broken*. It is said to be *broken* in the Eucharist, under the Sacramental veils, or, *ratione specierum*. This shall appear more clear when the words having reference to His sacred blood are examined. For, speaking of the chalice, He says, "*This chalice is the New Testament in My blood* (the chalice I say), *which shall be shed for you*," τούτο το ποτήριον . . . το ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυνόμενον which manifestly refer to the present pouring out of His blood, "*which is poured out*," &c. Our Redeemer employs the present tense, "*My body which is given*," not *to you*, for the purpose of manducation, which was expressed in the words "*take, eat*," but, "*for you*," to convey, that He was then not only instituting a *Sacrament*, but also instituting and offering up the *Sacrifice* of His body and blood, under the appearance of bread and wine, thus discharging the duty devolving on Him, as "*Priest according to the order of Melchisedech*."

PROOF OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

From the doctrine of the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, follows, as a necessary consequtary, the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. For, if it be once proved that our Saviour said of the bread which He took in His hands, that it was really and substantially His body, it follows, that He must have made it such, by changing it, in virtue of His omnipotent power. For, no one thing in nature can become really and substantially another thing of a different kind, unless it be changed into it. If, taking water into His hands at Cana, our Redeemer said, *this is wine*, the assertion would be false, unless He changed the water into wine. In like manner, were Moses to say of the rod in his hand, on flinging it on the ground, *this is a serpent*, it would not be true, unless it were changed into a serpent. Hence, when our Redeemer said, of what He held in His hands, viz., bread and wine, that they were really and substantially His body and blood, they should be changed into His body and blood, in order that His assertion would be true. "This wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood of Christ, by the consecration of the bread and wine, is properly called by the Holy Catholic Church, *Transubstantiation*." (Cone. Trid. SS. xiii. cap. iv. can. ii.) She employs similar phraseology, distinctly expressive of her doctrines, in reference to the mysteries of the Godhead, such as *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, &c.; and Protestants employ these terms, although not found in SS. Scripture. But, like the term, *Transubstantiation*, they express, in the clearest form, the doctrines found in SS. Scripture.

It is deserving of remark, that the three Evangelists and St. Paul give the same precise words, when treating of the consecration of the bread, "*This is My body*," to which St. Luke adds, "*which is given for you*;" St. Paul, "*which shall be delivered* (or, as the Greek has it, *which is broken*) *for you*." Both St. Luke and St. Paul add, "*Do this in commemoration of Me*." The Greek for "*commemoration*" (ἀναμνησκω), means, *remembrance*, as it is used in the Canon of the Mass, "*in mei memoriam facietis*," in remembrance of His death and Passion.

"*Do this*." "*This*," refers to the entire action of our Redeemer, taking bread, giving thanks, blessing, and transubstantiating it into His body and blood. By commanding them to do so, He gave them the power to obey His mandate. Hence,

the Council of Trent (SS. xxii. c. 1, de Mis. Sac.), tells us, that—"At the Last Supper, on the night on which He was betrayed, our Lord . . . declaring Himself to be constituted a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech, offered His body and blood, under the appearances of bread and wine, to God the Father; and under the symbols of the same things, delivered it to His Apostles, WHOM HE CONSTITUTED PRIESTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, to partake of it, and commanded them and their successors in the Priesthood to offer it, by these words, 'Do THIS IN COMMEMORATION OF ME.' " It is also defined (Can. 2), that by the words, "*do this*," &c., He constituted His Apostles Priests, and enjoined on them and other Priests to offer up His body and blood.

There were some things, however, done by our Redeemer on that occasion, which were not necessarily to be done by the Apostles and their successors afterwards, such as giving the Eucharist *after* supper, or giving it under *both* kinds, or giving it at all on some occasions. There were other things which should necessarily be always done. But what things should be done as necessary for the Sacrifice, and what things might be omitted, cannot be better ascertained than from the doctrine and practice of the Catholic Church, which, ever guided by the Spirit of God, teaches us, that for the validity of the Sacrifice, the words of our Lord should be employed of necessity, as the *form* of consecration of the bread and wine; that both species should necessarily be consecrated for the Sacrifice; that both should be consumed by the celebrant, to carry out our Lord's ordinance. In other points, her discipline has varied, as she has not regarded them of Divine precept, in which it would be beyond her power to dispense.

27. "*And taking the chalice, He gave thanks.*" St. Luke (xxii. 20), and St. Paul (1 Cor. xi.), say, "*In like manner the chalice also, after He had supped.*" "*In like manner,*" that is, He acted in reference to the chalice, as He did with regard to the bread, He took it into His hands, He blessed, gave thanks, and gave it to them to be divided among them. "*After He had supped,*" conveys to us, that this sacred banquet did not appertain to the Paschal and common Jewish suppers, of which He and His disciples had partaken already.

That it was only *after* the Paschal supper, and the Jewish common supper, which immediately succeeded the Paschal supper—for, the Paschal lamb could not satiate the cravings of the number, ten at least, who should join in partaking of it—the bread, too, was transubstantiated, is certain; for, our Redeemer would not have divided this mystery, so that a part would be instituted before the Paschal supper, and the other part after it. By one continuous action, both parts, that is, the entire Sacrament, was instituted (see verse 26).

"*Drink ye all of this.*" By "*all*," are meant, the twelve Apostles, who were present. The term, "*all*," applies to the same, of whom St. Mark, who by anticipation describes this circumstance, before the consecration took place (xiv. 23), says, "*and they all drank of it.*" Our Redeemer does not say, in reference to His body, "*eat ye all of this*;" because, having broken the bread, He divided it into as many parts as there were persons present to partake of it; and hence. no fear of mistake. But, to avoid mistake, since He could not separate the contents of the chalice, as He did the bread, and lest those who received it first, might consume the entire, He conveys to them, that it should be so used as that all would partake of a portion of it. This is more clearly expressed in reference to the Paschal cup, by St. Luke (xxii. 17), "*Take, and divide it among you.*"

From the words of this verse, the enemies of the Church endeavour to derive an

argument against the practice of the Catholic Church, relative to administering the Eucharist under one kind, in the form of bread only to the laity. This practice universally existed in the Church at the time of the Council of Constance; and this discipline was there enacted (SS. xiii.) as a law. The giving the Holy Eucharist under both or either species is a matter of discipline which may vary according to the will of the Church. If it were a Divine precept to administer the Holy Eucharist under both species; then, no individual or body of men could, without sacrilege, administer one portion without the other. For, the power of the Church, in any arrangement regarding the dispensation of the Sacraments must be always exercised, *salva illorum substantia* (Cone. Trid. SS. xxi. c. 2). Hence, the Church of Christ, while administering the Eucharist in the early ages, not unfrequently under both kinds, allowed it to be given, in certain cases, under one kind only. She never regarded it as a Divine mandate to give it under both kinds. She allowed Communion under one kind—1st. To *infants*, under the form of *wine* only, without the consecrated Host (Cyprian, de lapsis 2). 2ndly. In *domestic Communions*, the faithful, on account of the persecution, were permitted to carry consecrated *Hosts*, but not consecrated *wine*, to their own houses for *private Communion* (Tertul., Lib. ii., *ad uxorem*, c. 5; Cyprian, de lapsis). 3rd. In the manner of administering the *Sacrament* to the sick (Eusebius de His. Lib. 6, c. 44). Hence, the early Church regarded, as a point of discipline only, which she has full power to change, at any time for just reasons the giving of Communion under both kinds, or, one kind only.

The doctrine of the Church, as well as her practice on this point (Council of Constance, SS. xiii.; Trent, SS. xxi., c. i.-ii., Can. i.-ii. de Com.) is grounded:—

1st. On the words of our Redeemer, who, while He says, “*unless you eat . . . and drink His blood,*” &c., also declares, “*if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever;*” “*the bread which I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world;*” also “*he that eateth this bread, shall live for ever.*”

2ndly. On the principle of faith, that under each species, the entire body and blood, together with the soul and Divinity of Christ, are contained. For, since Christ arose from the dead to die no more, wherever His (living) body is, there must His blood and His soul also be, by a natural concomitance; and so also must His Divinity, which, since the Hypostatic union, was never separated from either His body or soul. Whoever, therefore, receives one species, receives Christ whole, God and man, without any separation or *mutilation* whatsoever; he receives body and blood together, which can never be separated; and we contend, from the texts already adduced, and the interpretation by the Church of the other texts, which would seem to require the separate reception of each, that this is all that is required by the Divine precept.

“Now in order to reconcile the three texts already adduced, where there is question only of partaking of the heavenly ‘bread,’ with those in which the *cup* and *drinking* are mentioned, we must of necessity say, that by *eating and drinking* is meant, the ACTION of RECEIVING the body and blood of Christ, and not precisely the manner of receiving; and, hence, the precept regarded not the *manner* of receiving, but only the thing *received*. This interpretation is in perfect accordance with the scope of our Redeemer’s discourse (John vi.), which was to convince His hearers, that unless their souls were nourished with the real flesh and blood of the Son of man, they would forfeit everlasting life; and that by partaking of His body and blood, they would have life everlasting. So that, provided the real body and blood of Christ be received, whether it be by the *action* of eating or of drinking only, or by both together, the worthy communicants, by receiving Christ whole, the fountain of *grace* and *eternal life*, fully

satisfy the *end of Christ's institution*, and perform all that is obligatory in the *precept of Communion.*" (Manning's reply to Leslie, Case Stated, sec. xxxix.)

The external form of drinking is neither excluded by the texts, which mention *eating alone*, nor *commanded* by the texts, which mention *them both*. Our Redeemer, by attributing, at one time, the whole efficacy and virtue of the Sacrament to *eating alone*; and, at other times, to *eating and drinking conjointly*, shows, that it is not the external form or manner of receiving under *one* or *both kinds*, but the *thing received*, that bestows grace and eternal life on the worthy receiver; and His attributing the whole virtue and efficacy of the Sacrament to eating alone, proves clearly, that when He mentions *eating and drinking*, this does not convey a precept, obliging all to receive the Sacrament under *both kinds*, but only to receive *His body and blood*, which, owing to the natural *concomitance* between Christ's body and blood, that must now, since His Resurrection, always exist united, is done by a communion under *one*, as well as under *both kinds*. And truly, as regards the meaning of the words of Christ, and the proper method of faithfully dispensing His Sacraments, that Church, which He commanded all to hear, with which He promised to be to the end of time—the pillar and ground of truth—which was taught all truth by the ever-abiding Spirit of God, which He appointed to feed and govern His flock, and dispense His mysteries, ought to be a better judge, and a more authorized interpreter, than a few factious individuals, without mission or authority, or any pretensions to Divine superintendence of any kind.

The disjunctive form employed by the Apostle (1 Cor. xi. 27), in which he says, "*that by eating or drinking unworthily, one is guilty of the body AND of the blood of our Lord,*" confirms the doctrine of the Church, and supposes, that *one* part could be received *worthily* without the other. For, the unworthiness, of which the Apostle speaks, does not consist in disjoining what, our adversaries maintain, should be taken by all *conjointly*, according to the institution of our Lord; but in the *previous* unworthy dispositions of the receivers, arising from sins against morals, committed before they approached Holy Communion (1 Cor. xi. 21, 22).

But, does not this charge against the Catholic Church, of mutilating the Sacrament of Christ's body, come well from those who utterly deny, that He is really present at all, either as to flesh or blood, soul or body? For the more perfect representation of our Lord's Passion, in which His blood flowed from His body, the Priests are bound, in offering Sacrifice, to consecrate and receive under *both kinds*, viz., of bread, which represents His flesh; and of wine, which aptly represents His blood. Should it be said, that when addressed by Christ, at the Last Supper, the Apostles represented the entire Church, it may be also said in reply, that they still continue to represent her, and that they carry out the commands of Christ, in this respect, as often as they offer Sacrifice and consecrate and receive under *both kinds*. It is His Priests our Redeemer directly addresses at the Last Supper, and commands to offer Sacrifice and distribute the Eucharist, in memory of His Passion. The only precept which indirectly, or by correlative obligation, binds the faithful, is to receive the Eucharist from the hands of their pastors, and by receiving it, to commemorate the death of Christ, which embraces also all the other mysteries of His life, &c.

Hence, in the Canon of the Mass the Church says, "*unde et memores . . . neonon et ab inferis resurrectionis, et gloriosæ Ascensionis,*" &c. But His death is specially commemorated, as in it, His charity towards mankind is specially manifested. The Church might, to-morrow, if she pleased, enjoin the administration of the Eucharist under the form of *wine alone*, or under *both species*; and she would actually do so, if graver reasons than those which influence her present discipline, on this head, were to present themselves.

28. "*This is My blood,*" &c. These words prove the Real Presence, taken literally, as they must be taken; for, it was by His real blood, "*the New Testament*" was sanctioned, ratified, and confirmed. "*Of the New Testament.*" The Greek article prefixed (τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης), *that of the New Testament*, would imply, that there was a reference to a Testament long before foretold by the Prophets, promised and preached by Christ Himself. The words of our Lord are evidently allusive to those employed by Moses, in sanctioning the old Testament: "*This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you*" (Exod. xxiv. 8; Heb. ix. 18, &c.), as if He said: Formerly, Moses solemnized the old covenant of God with your fathers, by sprinkling them with the blood of animals; but, I establish the new alliance with you, not by shedding upon your clothes the blood of animals; but, by refreshing your bodies and souls with My own blood. The comparison is clearly expressed between the blood, used by Moses (Exod. xxiv. 6), and the chalice of the Lord; between the interior and exterior effusion; between the blood of animals and the blood of Jesus Christ; and, consequently, between the sacrifice of Moses and that of Christ. It was with *real* blood, Moses sanctioned his Testament, and it would be absurd to say, it was with *unreal* blood a more perfect covenant was established and sanctioned by Christ.

"*Testament.*" He terms the covenant, which He had established with men, of granting, on His part, grace, remission of sin here, and the inheritance of life eternal hereafter, on the condition of their observing His Law and Commandments—and to observe these He promises His assistance—a "*Testament*;" because, it conveyed an inheritance bequeathed by a dying testator. This is the special meaning attached by St. Paul (Heb. ix. 16), to the word, διαθήκη.

"*New,*" in opposition to the old, entered into with the Jewish people (Exod. xix.-xxiv.; Jer. xxxi. 31). Moreover, it conveys blessings of a newer and still more exalted spiritual character, than those guaranteed by the old.

"*Which shall be shed.*" The Greek (ἐκχυνόμενον), has a present signification, and, doubtless, has reference to the present pouring out of His blood. This means, the same as offering it in sacrifice to God the Father; and this is very significantly conveyed by the Evangelists and St. Paul, when they use a word of the present tense, in reference to this effusion of Christ's blood, as St. Luke and St. Paul do in reference to His sacred body: "*which is delivered*;" "*which is broken.*" They meant to convey, that there is reference, primarily, to the Sacrament and Sacrifice He was then instituting; although, no doubt, it had reference to the blood shed on the cross, with which that poured forth and offered up, at the Last Supper, was identical, and from which it borrowed all its efficacy; and, also, to the further continuance of the rite to the end of time. On this account, most likely it was, that the Vulgate interpreter rendered the Greek word, ἐκχυνόμενον, in the future tense, "*effundetur.*" According to St. Luke (xxii. 20), the effusion which took place must regard the Last Supper, "*the chalice . . . which (chalice) shall be shed for you* (το ποτήριον . . . το υπερ υμων εκχυνόμενον), *the chalice poured out for you.*"

"*For many.*" Some say, that by "*many*," are meant the entire human race; for, they are *many*. Others say, our Redeemer only refers to the most of those present; for, Judas could not derive any profit ultimately from the innocent blood which he betrayed. In St. Luke and St. Paul, in reference to His body, it is, "*given for you*;" and the same is the reading in St. Luke, in reference to the blood, "*shed for you.*" It may be, that our Redeemer employed both forms, as is adopted by the Church in the words of consecration, "*qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem,*" &c. Others, however, say, that our Redeemer used only one form or the other; but, that the Church, without deciding which were the precise words, whether *pro vobis*, or, *pro*

multis, both being identical in sense, adopted both in the canon, neither being regarded, according to the more probable opinion, as an essential part of the words of consecration.

"*For the remission of sins.*" This *remission* is the source and fountain of all the other blessings promised and conveyed in the New Testament. It precedes their attainment. In this, His blood differs from that of the Old Testament, which availed only for "*the cleansing of the flesh*" (Heb. ix. 13).

The fruit or effects of this blood, poured forth on the cross, is obtained when it is poured out in the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, and also, when it is applied to our souls, through the Sacraments, the channels divinely instituted for communicating to us the abundant graces purchased for us on the cross. The very fact of our Redeemer saying, that this blood was poured out in the Eucharist, "*for the remission of sins,*" shows it to be a *Sacrifice*, this being the direct end and effect of a Propitiatory Sacrifice; for, as a *Sacrament*, it supposes, in order to be worthily received, that the receiver has *purged* himself, and approached with a conscience free from sin. And, also, as a *Sacrament*, its primary end and effect is, not "*the remission of sins,*" but the preservation and increase of spiritual life. Our Redeemer could have also added, "*for the remission of sins,*" when speaking of His body, since it was delivered *for the remission of sins*; but, it is only when speaking of His blood He says so, because, it is to the effusion of blood, the effects of sacrifice are attributed in the Old Law. Moreover, blood is a more expressive symbol of His death, by which He atoned for our sins, than was His flesh.

The form of consecration of the chalice recorded by St. Luke (xxii. 20), and by St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 25), who both agree, is quite different from that given by St. Matthew here, and by St. Mark (xiv. 24). St. Luke has it, "*This is the chalice, the New Testament in My blood;*" St. Paul, "*This chalice is the New Testament in My blood.*" From the Greek of St. Luke, in which is omitted the substantive verb, *is*—τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου—it cannot be determined for certain, whether it should be rendered, "*This is the chalice, the New Testament in My blood.*" or, "*This chalice is the New Testament in My blood,*" as in St. Paul. He alludes to the New Testament only when speaking of His blood, not when referring to His body; because, it was with *blood* that covenants were ratified among all nations. The word, *chalice*, is not expressed in the form employed either by St. Matthew here, or by St. Mark (xiv. 24); and, as it is not probable that our Redeemer used both forms, it is most likely, that St. Matthew, who was present, records the identical words used by our Redeemer on the occasion. The words of St. Luke and St. Paul, although substantially the same with St. Matthew, ought to be explained by the clearer form recorded by St. Matthew, who more clearly expresses what our Redeemer chiefly intended, viz., to give them His body and blood. The allusion to the *New Testament*, recorded by all, was merely explanatory and incidental, and introduced subordinately to His leading assertion, that He was giving them His blood. But, were we to adopt the form of St. Luke, it will come to the same as St. Matthew's, viz., *This is the chalice, whereby is ratified and confirmed the New Testament, and that through My blood, which it contains.*

Maldonatus holds, that the words, "*in My blood*" (*in sanguine meo*), are, by a Hebrew idiom, put for, "*of My blood*" (*sanguinis mei*), and that they should be connected with *chalice*, thus: "*This is the chalice of My blood, which (chalice) is the New Testament.*" In this construction, there is no figure whatever in the form of St. Luke. The chalice, containing the blood, is the authentic instrument whereby the New Testament was sanctioned and ratified. By a usage, common to all language, the word, "*Testament,*" not only means the thing bequeathed in one's will, but the

written, authentic instrument, as also, the copy of that will. In this latter sense, the word, *Testament*, is used by St. Luke and St. Paul. By St. Matthew, in the former sense, viz., the very thing bequeathed; since it was in virtue, or, through the merits of the blood of Christ, the blessings bequeathed, of grace here and of glory hereafter, were secured. On the cross, Christ published, as it were, by letters patent to all men. His dying covenant or testament with the human race. At the Last Supper, and all future repetitions of it, were contained authentic copies of the same, availing in such a way, that the right secured to all men by that original deed on the cross, would be *applied* to certain individuals; to the party for whom it is offered, as well as to the worthy receiver, who shall ultimately secure the actual possession and fruition of the promised blessings, secured on the cross, unless it be their own fault.

Should it be objected, that a copy should not precede the original, it may be said in reply, that our Redeemer, owing to the certain proximity of His Passion, upon which He was just entering, regarded it as past and accomplished. So that it was operative in its effects in regard to the Last Supper, as, indeed, it had been from the beginning of time. Hence, He was said to be, "*agnus occisus ab origine mundi*" (Apoc. xiii. 8).

29. "*This fruit of the vine*"—a more elegant phrase for wine, which is in another part of SS. Scripture called, "*the blood of the grape*" (Gen. xlix. 11)—some commentators, adhering to the order described by St. Matthew, who places these words, as spoken *after* the consecration, understand by them, the sacred blood of our Redeemer contained in the chalice, which is called *wine*, on account of the pre-existing matter from which it was changed; we find His sacred body called "*bread*" (John vi. 52. &c.; 1 Cor. xi. 27), for the same reason. Nothing is more common in SS. Scripture than to call things by the name of the substance out of which they were formed. Thus, the serpent is called, *the rod* of Moses; Adam, called, *dust*. The words will, then, mean: we shall not again drink together of this wine used at supper, under the appearance of which you drank My blood, until we drink it again in a far more excellent manner, "*in the kingdom of My Father*." According, however, to the more common, as well as the more general opinion of commentators, the words refer to the wine used at the Paschal or the common Jewish supper, both of which preceded the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. According to these, St. Matthew, for brevity's sake, describes as occurring at the Eucharistic institution, what took place at the suppers which preceded it. Hence, he does not strictly follow the order of events observed by our Divine Redeemer, which is so fully and so accurately described by St. Luke. Both Matthew and Mark place *after* the consecration of the chalice, what occurred *before* it, as recorded by St. Luke (xxii. 15-18), who informs us, that our Redeemer expressed Himself in the same terms in regard to the Jewish Paschal lamb. Hence, most likely, the words of this verse were employed by our Redeemer in reference to the chalice whereof the Jewish householder, after partaking of the Paschal lamb, first tasted, and then sent it round to be tasted by all present, as we have from the traditions of the Jews. The words constitute, as it were, the valedictory address of our Redeemer to His Apostles, at parting. They, at the same time, convey the consoling assurance of the supreme felicity in reserve for them in the kingdom of heaven, which He represents under the figure of a banquet, in which enjoyment of the most exquisite kind, metaphorically represented by *wine*, is in store for God's faithful servants. Of course, our Lord does not say, that, in any sense, whether literally or metaphorically, they were to drink of His blood in the kingdom of heaven.

"*Until that day*," refers to some distant time, when the just shall be inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and shall drink of the torrents of His delights.

The wine is called "*new*," of a different and more excellent kind, according to a Hebrew idiom, calling whatever was most excellent, "*new*." "*Cantate Domine Canticum novum.*"

"*Kingdom of My Father*," the kingdom of God's glory in heaven. St. Luke refers to the same: "*And I appoint to you, as My Father appointed to Me, a kingdom . . . at My table in My kingdom*" (xxii. 29, 30). Although these words were uttered by our Redeemer before He gave His body and blood, nor does St. Matthew say anything to the contrary; still, they are fitly recorded by St. Matthew *after* the Last Supper, as they contain our Redeemer's valedictory and consoling address to His Apostles.

But did not our Redeemer eat and drink with His Apostles, after His resurrection? Yes; He did so, however, not for the sustenance of mortal life, but only (Acts x. 41), in a passing way, and to prove the truth of His resurrection. Hence, it might be regarded as *not happening*, just as He regards His conversation with them after His resurrection as not happening at all: "*These are the words I spoke to you, while I was yet with you*" (Luke xxiv. 44). Moreover, might not the words regarding His "*kingdom*" be understood of His glorious state, after His resurrection?

But, how could our Redeemer have used the word, *wine*, in a different sense in the same sentence—real wine, "*this fruit of the vine*;" and wine, in a metaphorical sense, "*new in the kingdom*," &c.? The words, "*this fruit of the vine*," refer to wine in general, whether in a literal or metaphorical sense. So does the word "*it*." "*Drink it new.*" From circumstances it must be determined, when it is used literally; when metaphorically. In the former case, it is used literally; in the latter, metaphorically. Thus, He says in the same breath, "*suffer the dead to bury their dead*," also, "*every one who shall drink of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water which I shall give him*," &c. (John iv. 13.) In both these quotations, the same words, "*dead*," and "*water*," have different meanings, in the same sentence, viz., literal and metaphorical.

Some commentators, with Mauduit (Disser. xxiii.), maintain, that the words of St. Luke (xxii. 18), are different from those of St. Matthew in this verse, and uttered at different times. In St. Luke it is, "*of the fruit of the vine*;" here, "*of this fruit of the vine*." Mauduit contends, that our Redeemer employed the words recorded by St. Luke *before* the institution of the Eucharist; those of St. Matthew, when giving the Apostles His adorable body and blood.

30. "*And a hymn being said*." The Greek word, ὑμνήσαντες, would show, that they sung the hymn. Some commentators think, that our Redeemer composed a hymn for the occasion. However, as we have no record of this, others are of opinion, that they all joined in singing the Eucharistic song, contained in the Jewish ritual for thanksgiving after the Paschal supper. It commenced with Psalm cxii., "*Laudate, pueri*," &c., and embraced the five following Psalms, as far as, "*Confitemini Domino*," &c., inclusive.

"*They went out to Mount Olivet*," distant from the city about one mile, or, "*a Sabbath-day's journey*" (Acts i. 12). Hitherto our Redeemer, during the last days of His life, after having spent the day-time in preaching in the temple, was wont, each evening, to return to Bethania to supper; and thence, He went to Mount Olivet, where He spent the night, no doubt in prayer, according to His usual custom. On this occasion, He did not go to Bethania, having supped at Jerusalem, whence He proceeded directly to Mount Olivet, at the foot of which was the Garden of Gethsemani, to be apprehended by Judas, and handed over to the Jews.

St. John records a lengthened discourse delivered by our Redeemer, immediately after giving communion to His Apostles. From the words at the end of c. xiv. of

St. John, "*Arise, let us go hence,*" some commentators infer, that our Redeemer, after having delivered the discourse contained in John (xiii., xiv.), had joined His Apostles in singing a hymn of thanksgiving, as recorded by the three other Evangelists, and, then, on His way to Mount Olivet, delivered the remainder of the discourse contained in cc. xv., xvi., xvii. of St. John. When He told them, to "*arise,*" suiting the action to the word, He went forth—they in obedience accompanying Him—to meet His enemies, and prove the sincerity of His love for His Heavenly Father (John xiv. 31). Others, however, maintain, that, the whole discourse of our Redeemer recorded (John xiii.—xvii.), was delivered by our Redeemer before leaving the supper hall. It would be inconvenient to deliver it, on His way to so large a number as His *eleven* Apostles, who, probably, could hardly hear Him conveniently. Besides, St. John does not say, He left immediately on saying the words, "*arise,*" &c. He insinuates, on the contrary (xviii. 1), "*When Jesus had said these things, He went forth,*" &c., that it was after delivering the entire discourse, He left. The words (xiv. 31), "*arise,*" &c., would only convey, at most, that they all arose, and that while standing, anxiously wishing Him to prolong His parting words, He delivered the portion of His discourse contained in cc. xv., xvi., xvii., in a standing posture, before finally departing from the supper hall for the scene of His Passion. St. Luke (xxii. 21-39) records other matters spoken by Him on that occasion, which are omitted by St. John.

TEXT.

31. *Then Jesus saith to them: All you shall be scandalized in me this night. For it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed."*

32. *But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*

33. *And Peter answering, said to him: Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized.*

34. *Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee, that in this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice.*

35. *Peter saith to him: Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner said all the disciples.*

36. *Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani: and he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray.*

37. *And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad.*

38. *Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here, and watch with me.*

39. *And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

40. *And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me?*

41. *Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.*

42. *Again the second time, he went and prayed, saying: My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done.*

43. *And he cometh again, and findeth them sleeping: for their eyes were heavy:*

44. *And leaving them, he went again: and he prayed the third time, saying the self same word.*

45. *Then he cometh to his disciples, and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

46. *Rise, let us go: behold he is at hand that will betray me.*

COMMENTARY.

31. "*Then,*" on His way to the Garden of Gethsemani (v. 36).

"*All you,*" My Apostles, who have hitherto faithfully adhered to Me.

"*Shall be scandalized in Me this night.*" The word, "*scandal,*" which literally means, a stumbling-block that causes us a fall, transferred to the spiritual order, means, whatever is the occasion of our falling into sin, or proves a rock of spiritual offence (see xi. 6). Our Redeemer means here, that He shall prove a stumbling-block to His Apostles; that they shall take occasion, from what they shall see happening Him, that night, to fall into sin. This He predicts, to prove His divine insight into future contingent things; and God permitted this, for several reasons, among the rest, to afford matter for greater sufferings and sorrow for our Redeemer, seeing that His very chosen friends would desert Him; also to convince the Apostles of their weakness, and to teach them to commiserate the fallen. Commentators are not agreed, as to what the sin referred to here, was. It is the more common opinion, that their sin consisted, not precisely in their deserting their Master, and leaving Him as they did, in the hands of His enemies; since, they might have known, He willingly presented Himself for death; but, in the principle of this desertion, arising from weakness and vacillation in their faith, owing to which they imagined He was forcibly overpowered by His enemies, and that, He could not fulfil the promise He made, as Son of God, to rise again. It is to this our Redeemer refers (John xvi. 31, 32). Some commentators extend this not alone to the Apostles, but to the whole of His followers. This, as St. Augustine remarks, was clearly the case with Cleophas (Luke xxiv.); "*but, we hoped that He would redeem Israel,*" as if they had not this hope any longer. The words of this verse are placed by Concordances of the Gospel, immediately after the words addressed by our Redeemer to St. Peter (Luke xxii. 31). After reminding St. Peter, of the trial He should undergo, He next addressed the entire body, and predicted their fall. As regards St. Peter himself, some say, he actually lost faith in Christ; he was not yet constituted head of the Church. Others maintain, he did not sin against faith, which he always retained in his heart; for, our Lord prayed, that "*his faith would not fail*" (Luke xxii. 32), but, against the external profession, or, confession of faith, and thus lost charity.

"*For, it is written*" (Zach. xiii. 7), "*I will strike the shepherd,*" &c. In the original Hebrew and in the Septuagint, it is, "*strike the shepherd,*" as if addressed by God to the "*sword.*" But the Evangelist gives the sense. The words of Zacharias, in the imperative form, convey, that God Himself will strike the shepherd, or suffer him to be struck by the Jews. "*He delivered Him up for us all*" (Rom. viii. 32). The words of the Prophet are applied by our Lord to Himself; and, although they regarded the Priests of the Old Law, in the first place; still, the context shows, they applied, in a special way, to Christ, the Shepherd of shepherds, "*and Bishop of our souls*" (1 Peter ii. 25).

"*And the sheep of the flock,*" &c. The Apostles and the followers of Christ, whom He gathered together again after His resurrection. The word, "*flock,*" is not in the passage from the Prophet; it is added by the Evangelist, for clearness' sake.

32. He arms them against despair or excessive diffidence, by this consoling prediction, that before they would have returned to their native district of Galilee, He would be there before them, to collect them together again and care them. Some expositors think the pastoral metaphor is here kept up, and that it is allusive to the custom with shepherds in the East, of not *following*, but of *going* before and leading their sheep.

Commentators here direct attention to the wonderful mildness of our Redeemer, who, although about to die for His Apostles, and while predicting their desertion of Him; still, far from showing embittered feelings or upbraiding them, on the contrary, promises to console and protect them.

33. St. Peter, whose vehement, burning zeal for his Divine Master, made him always take a more prominent part than the rest in all things tending to defend His interests, from an impulse of love and fervour, not measuring his own strength, and not considering his natural infirmity, exclaims at once, "*though all men shall be scandalized,*" he never would be scandalized or desert Him. In this, he committed a threefold sin. 1st. By contradicting his Divine Redeemer, and not acquiescing in His words. 2ndly. By preferring himself to others. 3rdly. By presuming too much on his natural strength, and arrogating to himself what should proceed only from the Divine mercy.

34. But as this proceeded from love, our Redeemer treats him mildly; and merely tells him, that as he presumed more than others, he would be scandalized still more than they. The others would fly; he would even abjure his Divine Master.

"*This very night,*" on which you seem so confident, "*before the cock crow*"—thus defining precisely the time of the night it would occur, viz., before the time of night, or early morning, specially termed *cock-crowing*—"thou shalt deny Me," not merely by flying, or deserting Me, like the other Apostles; but, thou shalt abjure and deny Me, and swear thou knowest nothing of Me, and this, not *once*, but "*thrice.*" All these words of our Redeemer are very emphatic.

St. Mark has, "*before the cock crow twice*" (xiv. 30), whereas the other three Evangelists simply speak of "*cock crow.*" Both assertions are easily reconciled. The cock crows twice in the night, at midnight, and at daybreak in the morning, and the latter is principally regarded as the hour of cock-crowing. It is to this latter, the other Evangelists refer; and St. Mark mentions it more circumstantially, because he, probably learned from St. Peter, whose disciple he was, that our Lord distinctly mentioned these words. All the Evangelists (Matt. xxvi. 72-74; Luke xxii. 60; Mark xiv. 72; John xviii. 27) concur in narrating the fulfilment of this prophecy, and Peter's repentance.

35. Far from being inspired with sentiments of diffidence in himself, and distrust in his present strength and future resolves, after the declaration of our Divine Redeemer, Peter, on the contrary, "*spoke the more vehemently*" (Mark xiv. 31), saying, "*though I should die with Thee,*" &c. So did all the rest, lest they should seem to be inferior to Peter in courage and fidelity to their Divine Master. In the hour of trial, they all proved equally weak and cowardly. They, as well as Peter, sinned by presumption, and by not perfectly acquiescing in the words of their Divine Master. Not that they disbelieved Him; but, they regarded His words rather as a menace than as a prediction; and in speaking thus, they considered their own present resolve and love for their Master, which they wished thus openly to profess and declare, rather than His words, which they regarded more as expressing distrust in themselves, than as conveying a prophecy. This prediction did not, in the least, interfere with their liberty or freedom of action; our Redeemer predicted it as He foresaw it; and He foresaw it in the way it happened, viz., freely and voluntarily. The announcement of this knowledge or foresight did not, in any way, interfere with the freedom of their act at any particular time or moment. Just as the announcement, that an act is *now* freely and volun-

tarily taking place would not interfere with the freedom of the agent concerned. All things are *present* with God. He foresees things, *because* they are to happen, and *how* they are to happen, viz., freely, if there be question of contingent free acts.

36. "*A country place, called Gethseman,*" which word signifies, *oil presses*, as the garden probably contained presses for manufacturing oil from the olives of the neighbouring Mount Olivet. St. John says, it had attached to it, "*a garden beyond the Torrent Cedron,*" which was to the east of Jerusalem, and flowed by this place and Jerusalem. Our Redeemer and His disciples were in the habit of resorting to this place (John xviii. 2); and hence, it was well known to the traitor. He now enters it, to show, that He voluntarily underwent death, as He wished to go to the place where the traitor might easily apprehend Him. His passing over the brook Cedron, may have been meant to recall the sufferings of David, flying before his unnatural son, Absalom—a fit type of our Lord, who suffered at the hands of ungrateful children—moreover, it recalls the words of the Psalmist, "*de torrente in via bibet.*" He drank there deeply of the cup of tribulation. The garden—the first theatre of our Saviour's bitter Passion—was calculated to remind us forcibly—and it may have been so intended—of another Garden, where sin commenced, which He is now about to atone for.

"*Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray.*" He went apart from His disciples, to teach us to retire, as far as possible, from all occasions of distraction in prayer, and "*pray to our Father in secret.*" He, moreover, did not wish them all to be witnesses of His sufferings, lest it might be an occasion of scandal, and weaken their faith. Whether He told the eleven, "*Pray, lest ye enter into temptation,*" as is insinuated by St. Luke (xxii. 40), or merely said so to the three whom He selected as witnesses of His Passion (v. 41), is uncertain. Most likely, He addressed the words to the eleven, before leaving them, and a second time to those whom He had chosen to accompany Him (v. 41).

37. He selected as witnesses of His Passion, as most likely to be less scandalized by it, those whom He had chosen as witnesses of His glory on Thabor.

"*He began to grow sorrowful,*" shows He had not been sorrowful in presence of the other Apostles, and that now this sorrow commences, which was consequently voluntary, and freely endured, when and where, and to whatever extent He desired.

"*To be sorrowful and sad.*" The word, "*sad,*" implies a kind of stupor, and insensibility; a weariness of life, caused by the grief and fear with which He was overwhelmed. For "*sorrowful,*" St. Mark has, *εκαμβεύσθαι*, *seized with terror*. Most likely, both Evangelists convey the different sensations then felt in an excessive degree by our Divine Redeemer, viz., fear, sadness, and sorrow, together with a stupor and insensibility, accompanied with a loathing weariness of life. All these feelings, at the same time, agitated Him. They constituted what St. Luke (xxii. 43), expresses in one word, His "*agony.*" "*And being in an agony, He prayed the longer.*"

38. "*Then He saith to them,*" viz., the three Apostles, whom He wished to be witnesses of His *agony* in the garden.

"*My soul is sorrowful.*" The Greek word, "*περίλυτος,*" means, *sorely grieved, excessively afflicted*. Not My body, but "*My soul,*" is, as it were, rent in two by the excess and multitude of the sorrows that overwhelm Me, "*intraverunt aquæ usque ad animam meam.*" (Isa. lxviii.)

"*Even unto death,*" intensifies the above. As if He said: I experience such sorrow,

as would be capable of producing death; such sorrow, as those endure, who are on the point of dissolution, struggling, in the last agonies of death. Hence, St. Luke tells us, He was "*in an agony*" (xxii. 43).

Our Redeemer, as the victim of atonement for sin, was resolved to endure all its punishment. Hence, He voluntarily endured all those feelings of excessive sadness, fear, and weariness in His soul, to experience what our sins merited, viz., "*What a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Heb. x. 31). Hence, it is also, that as His body was to be tortured by men; so is his soul, the more noble part of His humanity, to be delivered over, in the Garden, to the more dire execution of His Heavenly Father, and of His own outraged Divinity.

He endures all this punishment in His *soul*; to atone for our sinful pleasures of *interior* sense. He *fears* death, to atone for our *reckless insensibility to eternal death*. He is *sad and sorrowful*; because we *rejoiced* in the thoughts and recollections of our *past iniquity*. His Passion commences with *interior* sorrow; because, our sins commence with acts of the *will* drawn to sensible pleasures. These sorrows had also the effect of proving to after ages, the reality of His tortures, and the excess of His love for man.

These feelings of sorrow, fear, &c., in our Redeemer were voluntary, and the natural consequence of the human nature which He assumed. For, He became like to us in all things, sin excepted. As He was subject to hunger, cold, nay, death itself, so was He also subject to sadness, &c. It is not easy to determine whether He was of necessity subject to them, or whether, by dispensation, He assumed them for a time. Any necessity arising from His human nature could be impeded in its effects by His Divinity. Hence, His human nature, did not endure these things necessarily; but only so far as His Divine nature permitted them. It may, therefore, be said, that He assumed these by dispensation for a time. But, in Him, unlike us, these passions did not anticipate or affect the rational part of His soul, nor impel Him to evil, any more than they did in Adam, as long as He retained the original justice in which He was created.

It is most likely, that it was the certain approach of death and the concomitant tortures present before His mind, that affected His human nature and His human will, inasmuch as human nature naturally recoils from suffering. However, in Him this was ever subject to the will of God. "*Not My will,*" which, in His human nature, would avoid death and suffering; "*but Thine*"—the superior will of God—"be done."

The *sorrow* was, likely, produced by the clear knowledge of the multiplied sins of men, from the first disobedience of Adam to the last sin that was to be ever committed. He became the bail and surety with God for the payment of the heavy debt, which these entailed. "*On Him God laid the iniquities of us all.*" He, then, was cast into excessive sorrow, at the sight of this dark mass of iniquity—this unbearable weight of sin.

His *sadness*, most likely, arose from the prevision of the inefficacy of His tortures for millions of His creatures, who would ungratefully forget God's benefits, outrage His goodness, and precipitate themselves into hell.

Oh! how instructive to us is not the agony of this Godlike model of true penitents. How forcibly does He remind us of the excessive enormity of mortal sin and the sorrow which it merits. Jesus, though *innocent*, is so affected at the sight of our sins, as to shed drops of blood; and we, who are *guilty*, cannot be induced to look back on the follies and ignorances of our youth with a feeling of penitential regret, or bestow on them a thought of sorrow. Jesus *wails in spirit* at the sight of our deplorable condition, standing over the pit of hell; and we, with the *most reckless*

insensibility, pass along, although, perhaps, for a series of years, during which we unconcernedly reposed at night on our pillows, had death suddenly surprised us, as it did thousands of others, before the morning sun arose, we would be found opening our eyes in hell. A *God* is sorrowful, even unto death, for the sins of His guilty creature. And the *guilty creature*, with the example of a weeping God, feels neither compunction nor sorrow. Let us beware, lest one day, we may in vain call upon the mountains to fall upon us, and upon the hills to cover us, and lest, trampling on the blood of propitiation, we were only invoking on our own heads, the dreadful terrors of judgment.

“*Stay you here, and watch with Me ;*” in order that, besides being witnesses of His grief, they would learn, in all tribulation, to have recourse to prayer ; and by watching and sympathizing, they would in some measure console Him. He also told them to “*pray*” (Luke xxii. 40). He permitted Himself, however, to be deprived of the consolation arising from the sympathy of His friends. They are fast asleep, while His soul is sorrowing even unto death. “*He looked for one that would grieve together with Him ; one that would comfort Him, and He finds none*” (Psa. lxxviii. 21).

39. “*A little further,*” from the chosen three. St. Luke says, “*a stone’s cast*” (xxii. 41). Whether the distance spoken of by St. Luke be the same as that referred to here by St. Matthew, or rather, the distance in regard to the eight other Apostles, as the reading in St. Luke would seem to imply, is uncertain. Possibly, however, as St. Luke makes no reference to the selection of Peter, James, and John, it may have reference to them, as here. Our Lord withdrew from them a short distance—which however, was such, that they could witness His sorrow—in order to enjoy, without interruption, the communication with Heaven, and to conceal from them, in some measure, the severity of His conflict, and pour forth the excess of His sorrows more fully in presence of His Heavenly Father.

“*He fell upon His face, praying.*” Most likely, He first prayed in a *kneeling* posture ; and, then, redoubling His prayer, prostrated Himself, His face touching the ground. By this prostration, He testified His deep affliction, His great humiliation, His reverence for His Father. He bore witness to the immense magnitude of the guilt of sin, which thus prostrated Him, as a penitent, before the outraged justice of Heaven. Being destitute of human consolation, in His unspeakable anguish, He turns towards Heaven, and says :

“*My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice,*” &c. St. Mark (xiv. 36) says, He commenced with proclaiming the omnipotence of God, “*all things are possible to Thee ;*” and, to mark His earnestness, He repeats the words, “*Abba, Father.*” By the words, “*if it be possible.*” He does not mean, absolute possibility, within the range of God’s omnipotence ; but only, if it be God’s will.

There is a great diversity of opinion about the meaning of, “*this chalice.*” The most probable opinion understands it, of His approaching torments and death, from which the humanity of Christ naturally recoiled. The word, “*chalice,*” is frequently used in Scripture, to denote the lot marked out by God for each one, whether good or evil (Psa. xv.), “*Dominus pars . . . et calicis mei ;*” “*Calix meus inebrians,*” &c. (Psa. xxii.) It is more commonly used in an evil sense, denoting death and misery—“*ignis, sulphur . . . pars calicis eorum*” (Psa. x.) ; “*Calix . . . plenus misto*” (Psa. lxxiv.), &c. This figurative signification of the word was not confined to the Jews ; it was quite common among the Gentiles. It, probably, had reference originally to the custom, quite prevalent amongst the ancients, on the part of the host, to assign to each guest a particular cup, as well as a dish ; and, from the *quantity and quality* of the liquor it contained, it marked the degree of respect the host had for each guest.

Hence, the word, "*cup*," came to signify the portion assigned to each man in life, good or evil. It is more frequently, however, used to designate the latter, in which sense, it may, probably, be allusive to the custom among the ancients, of giving to men condemned to death, as in the case of Socrates, a cup of poison to end their life. Most likely, our Redeemer here refers to His bitter Passion and death.

Our Redeemer well knew, that while, absolutely speaking, it was possible that the chalice might pass away, and He might escape death; still, consistently with the decrees of God, it was not possible. Hence, while the conditional form, "*if it be*," &c., expresses the natural desire of His human nature, or the desire of His natural appetite, and of His will, viewed under that respect, to escape death, He, at once, *absolutely* expresses the perfect conformity of His human, *rational* will to God's will, for the accomplishment of which He prays *unconditionally*; "*nevertheless, not as I will*," &c. This, St. Luke expresses more clearly (xxii. 42), "*not My will, but Thine be done*." He was heard for His reverence, when, with strong cry and tears, He then prayed. For, His human nature, by a *conditional* wish, prayed, that if it were possible, the chalice would pass; but, by an *absolute* wish, "*not My will, but Thine*," it prayed that God's will would be done, in which "*He was heard*" (Heb. v. 7).

From this passage is proved against the *Monothelites*, that there are *two wills* in Christ, as declared by the Sixth Synod, viz., the Divine and the Human. By this latter one, He merited our redemption; and this latter will, although one, is virtually twofold, viz., the *natural* human will, by which He recoiled from death, and the *rational* and free, whereby, subjecting Himself to the Divine will, He wished for death, "*not my will, but Thine*," &c. The former is *conditional* and inefficacious; the latter, *absolute* and efficacious; and both are materially and formally subject to God's will. And, although the natural will would seem to be materially opposed to the Divine, it was not so, in reality it was perfectly conformable to it; for, it was ruled by the rational, and, through it, subjected to the Divine will. And both the will of God and the rational will of Christ wished, that the *natural* will would, for the reasons already assigned, show this horror of death. Hence, it was, in reality, subject and conformable, in all things, to the supreme will of God (A. Lapide).

40. In the midst of His anguish, He is not unmindful of His disciples, in order to leave an example to all, who are charged with the care of others, of how they should look after their flock. While they are overwhelmed with sorrow for the sins of their flock, and fervently praying for them, they should not, at the same time, neglect to look after them.

He "*findeth asleep*." St. Luke says (xxii. 45), "*He found them sleeping for sorrow*." He shows, at the same time, His meekness and paternal consideration, although He finds them asleep, contrary to His injunctions; and, addressing Peter in particular, who always signalized himself, in his profession of love and zeal, for the interests of his Divine Master, He says, "*What?*" as if to say, is this the result of your boastful promises of dying for Me, so courageously uttered but a few moments ago? This exclamation is more clearly expressed by St. Mark (xiv. 37), "*Simon, sleepest thou?*"

"*Could you not watch one hour with Me?*" In St. Mark (xiv. 37) it is in the singular, as if addressed to Peter, "*couldst thou not watch?*" &c. Most likely, our Redeemer used the singular form, as in St. Mark; but, while addressing Peter, and reminding him of his promise of fidelity, which was uttered by all the others (v. 35), He addressed the other Apostles also. Hence, St. Mark gives the sense of **what our Redeemer intended**.

"*One hour*," a short time, while He was praying in extreme straits, and struggling in the agonies of death. Others, however, take the word in its literal meaning; and of this they understand the words of St. Luke (xxii. 43), "*He prayed the longer*."

41. He exhorts them to vigilance a second time (verse 38), and also to prayer, not on His own account, but for their sakes. Vigilance is a necessary accompaniment of efficacious prayer; vigilance will cause us to be on our guard against the wiles of our enemy. Prayer will procure from God the necessary strength to overcome him.

"*That ye enter not into temptation*." By this it is by no means meant, that they would not have to encounter temptations (for, in this life, no one can hope to be exempt from them; and, they are sent by God as an occasion of merit), but, that they would not yield or succumb to temptation, and be overcome by it, so as to fall into sin. Our Redeemer, most likely, warns them of the trial of their faith and fidelity to Him, which was just at hand. In this, they yielded to temptation, for want of prayer and vigilance, notwithstanding His repeated warnings. However, they soon repented, and were restored to grace, as was predicted of St. Peter (Luke xxii. 32).

"*The spirit, indeed, is willing*," that is, the rational will of the Apostles was willing to obey the commands of God, and the call of duty to their Divine Master. Their promptitude in crying out, "*although we should die*," &c. (verse 35), showed that.

"*But, the flesh is weak*." The sensitive and carnal appetite, ever inclined to embrace whatever gratifies corrupt nature, "*is weak*" and indolent in carrying out the desires of the will, bent on obeying the commands of God, opposed to the gratification of corrupt nature. Hence, they should pray for help from God, to strengthen their weak nature, and enable it to obey the dictates of their rational will, which desires the fulfilment of the law of God.

42. In addressing His Father a second time, He insinuates, that, while it would be agreeable to nature to escape the bitter death awaiting Him, it would, still, be more agreeable to Him to accomplish the Divine will. Hence, His second prayer is identical with the first, which is clearly intimated by St. Mark (xiv. 35), "*and going away again, He prayed, saying the same words*." In this repetition, our Redeemer leaves us an example of perseverance in prayer; and an example, also, of resignation and acquiescence in God's arrangements, under all crosses and contradictions.

43. "*Their eyes were heavy*." It was far gone in the night. St. Luke ascribes this heavy somnolency to the sorrow and sadness they were in. On this occasion, our Redeemer went away in silence.

44. "*And He prayed a third time, saying the self same words*." It is likely, it was on the occasion of His praying a "*third time*" that what St. Luke records (xxii. 43) took place, viz., "*an Angel from heaven (visibly) appeared, strengthening Him*." Some commentators are of opinion, that this occurred on each of the three occasions, in order to show us, that although Christ's prayer, for the passing away of the chalice, was not granted, still, it was not without fruit; it merited for Him to be strengthened by the Angel. However, it is most probable, that it was only on the occasion of His praying a *third time*, when He protracted His prayer somewhat longer, that this occurred, to teach us the good effect of perseverance in prayer.

While destitute of all human and Divine consolation, the human nature of our Lord was "*strengthened by an Angel from heaven*," corporally; so, that while His human nature was dissolving in the bloody sweat, and tending to the last extremity, His

sufferings were not allowed to terminate His life; *spiritually*, owing to the proposing to the intellect of the Man-God, of the motives which increased the resolution of His will to suffer, such as the decree of God to save the world by the death and torments of His Son; the glory that would redound to Him, and the salvation that would come to men from these tortures; the fulfilment of the several prophecies on this subject, &c. But, the proposing of these motives still left the inferior man absorbed in grief and sorrow. Hence, it is observed, that it was not *consolation*; but, *strength*, the Angel came to bring him.

St. Luke (*ibidem*) tells us, that He was "*in an agony*," by which is meant, the anguish of mind He suffered, arising from the struggle between His inferior and superior faculties. This word, "*agony*," expresses what SS. Matthew and Mark term, "*to be sorrowful and sad*," &c. "*He prayed the longer*." St. Luke thus briefly expresses what the other Evangelists describe more minutely, as praying three different times. Most likely, on the third occasion, when He permitted the struggle to be fiercest, His prayer was more fervent and prolonged.

St. Luke (*ibidem*) describes His sweat, the result of this "*agony*" and struggle, which "*became as drops of blood trickling down to the ground*." It was then that the "*Angel appeared, strengthening Him*." This is commonly understood of real blood. So great was the united effect of this fear, sadness, and sorrow, which constituted our Redeemer's "*agony*," that it naturally forced the blood to the heart; whilst the vehemence of His love, and the determined resolution of His will to suffer the death of the cross, drew, by an astonishing effect of His great soul, the blood from thence, with such force that, bursting through the veins, it flowed so profusely through every pore that, after saturating His garments, *it ran in streams along the ground*, on which He lay prostrate.

45. "*Then He cometh to His disciples*." After having been strengthened by the Angel, and laying aside the sorrow, sadness, fear, and all the traces of the bloody sweat and agony which He voluntarily assumed; and having now resumed His former courage and firm resolve to suffer the death of the cross, "*He cometh to His disciples, and saith to them: Sleep ye now, and take your rest*."

Some expositors of SS. Scripture, with St. Augustine (de Comm. Evan. Lib. 3, c. 4), say, the words are permissive, on the part of our Redeemer, condescending to the weakness of the Apostles, and now considerably permitting what He before had forbidden, when He wished them to watch during His agony. In favour of this view, they quote the words of St. Mark (xiv. 41), "*it is enough*," as if, in the words of St. Matthew, He granted them an interval for sleep: "*Sleep . . . and take your rest*," and after that roused them from sleep, saying, in the words of St. Mark, "*it is enough*." Others, with St. Chrysostom, maintain, that the words are spoken ironically, as if He said: Having already slept, when you should have watched, you may as well sleep now during the remainder of the time that is left you, before a sense of personal danger, just at hand, shall compel you to be on the alert, which My words failed to effect. The following words: "*Behold, the hour is at hand*," are strongly confirmatory of this view, as if He said: Sleep now, if you can; but, you cannot—the precise moment fixed and determined by God, "*and*" (that is, *in which*) "*the Son of man shall be betrayed, is at hand*"—the traitor and his employers are at the very door. These interpreters say, the words of St. Mark, "*it is enough*," are strongly confirmatory of the irony, as if He said: You have indulged long enough in sleep; the danger at hand prevents you from doing so any longer.

"*Shall be betrayed*"—(the Greek, *paradidoutai*, *is betrayed*)—*into the hands of sinners*,"

Judas and the Jewish High Priests, representing the entire Jewish nation—or, the Gentiles; for Judas got a cohort of Roman soldiers to accompany him. The Greek for, “*it is enough*” (ἀπέχει), causes some embarrassment to critics. Some understand by the word, “*he receives*,” that is, the devil receives power over Me. Others, “*they have an end*,” corresponding with the words of St. Luke (xxii. 37), “*for, the things concerning Me have an end*.” The rendering of the Vulgate is, “*sufficit*” (corresponding with the words of St. Luke xxii. 38), “*it is enough*.”

46. “*Arise*.” The Apostles were in a sitting or reclining posture, whilst asleep. “*Go hence*,” not fly, but courageously go forth to meet their enemies. “*Behold, he is at hand*,” &c. Strengthened by the Angel, our Redeemer resumes His wonted courage and contempt of personal danger. As in His agony, He exhibited the infirmity of assumed human nature, so now, He exhibits the majesty of His Divinity, by predicting the near approach of the traitor, which His Providence arranged, and by displaying Godlike courage and promptitude in going forth to meet death and confront His enemies.

TEXT.

47. *As he yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ancients of the people.*

48. *And he that betrayed him, gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, hold him fast.*

49. *And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail Rabbi. And he kissed him.*

50. *And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Then they came up, and laid hands on Jesus, and held him.*

51. *And behold one of them that were with Jesus, stretching forth his hand, drew out his sword: and striking the servant of the high priest, cut off his ear.*

52. *Then Jesus saith to him: Put up again thy sword into its place: For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.*

53. *Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of Angels?*

54. *How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done.*

55. *In that same hour Jesus said to the multitudes: You are come out as it were to a robber with swords and clubs to apprehend me. I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and you laid not hands on me.*

56. *Now all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then the disciples all leaving him, fled.*

COMMENTARY.

47. “*As He yet spoke*.” Mark and Luke note the same circumstance, to show the truth of His prediction regarding the near approach of the traitor. “*Behold*,” a matter of wonder, a crime unheard of, that “*Judas, one of the twelve*”—one of His chosen friends—raised to the highest dignity—destined to be one of the pillars of the future edifice of His Church—on whom He had bestowed so many marks of favour and friendship, should be the party to betray Him.

“*And with him a great multitude*.” This multitude was composed of “*a band of men, and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees*” (John xviii. 3). Among them was a “*Tribune*” (John xviii. 12), and “*chief priests, and magistrates of the temple and ancients*” (Luke xxii. 52). St. Luke says. “*Judas went before them*” (verse 47). He

knew the place well (John xviii. 2), as our Lord was in the habit of resorting to it. Hence, probably, after searching the hall where our Redeemer had celebrated the Last Supper, he repaired thither, at once.

They came "*with swords and clubs*," and also, "*with torches and lanterns*" (John xviii. 3). Can any thing so clearly demonstrate the folly of the enemies of our Redeemer, or the blindness with which the demon of avarice inflicted on Judas, as their imagining that these weapons would prove of any avail against Him, who, by a single act of His power, prostrated them on the ground? (John xviii. 6.)

48. Not only does the traitor have recourse to violent measures to secure the apprehension of his Divine Master; but, he has also recourse to the basest treachery and dissimulation. He gave those who accompanied him, most of them Roman soldiers and Pagans, to whom our Redeemer was personally unknown, a sign whereby to distinguish Him from the others, "*Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He*," for whose betrayal I have stipulated; "*hold Him fast*." This he adds, lest our Redeemer should slip from their hands, as often happened before, when His life was menaced; and the traitor would miss the promised thirty pieces of silver (verse 15; Mark xiv. 11). He had not yet received the money; it was only promised.

Mark adds (xiv. 44), that the traitor also said, "*lead Him away carefully*," lest our Redeemer might, by any means escape them; or, lest any tumult being created by His apprehension, the people might rescue Him out of their hands; and thus, he might fail to secure the promised blood money.

Most likely, our Redeemer, in accordance with the usage of the time, saluted His Apostles with a kiss when He met them, or when they returned after any absence; and Judas employed this sign of friendship and salute of peace, as a covert means of concealing from the Apostles, who surrounded our Redeemer, his treacherous designs.

49. Going before the crowd, he came up to our Redeemer, saying: "*Hail, Rabbi*"—words expressive of respect—"Rabbi," that is, Master; "*and he kissed Him*." Both by his feigned language of respect and his conduct, he wished to conceal his wicked design.

But our Redeemer showed, that violent as well as treacherous measures were equally unavailing against Him. He showed the one, by prostrating His enemies (John xviii. 6); and He showed how clearly He saw through the treachery of Judas, by the following question.

50. *Friend, whereto art thou come?* He calls him "*friend*"—although, now, His deadliest enemy—on account of their former friendship; and because, he now exhibits the sign of friendship as usual. He also thus addresses him, in order to show His compassionate feelings for him, and His grief for his fall; thus, if possible, to reclaim him.

"*Whereto art thou come?*" which is more clearly expressed by St. Luke (xxii. 48), "*Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?*" "*Whereto art thou come?*" If your design be hostile, why salute Me with the sign of friendship? If friendly, what means this armed band that accompanies thee? After having thus kissed Him, Judas retired back among those who came with him, "*and stood with them*" (John xviii. 6). Oh! how pathetically had the Royal Psalmist (Psa. liv. 13), described the anguish caused our Redeemer by the treason of His chosen disciple, "*si inimicus meus maledixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique*," &c. We are told by Moses

(Gen. vi. 7), that the sins of *God's enemies*—the giant sinners of old—so affected Him, that He cried out, “*It repenteth Me that I made them.*” And still, the Psalmist assures us, that the outrage offered God, which made Him sorry for creating man, was tolerable, compared with the anguish caused Him by the treason of His apostate disciple, “*tu, vero, homo unguinis, dux meus et notus meus; qui simul mecum dulces capiebas citos*” (Psa. liv. 14). Doubtless, we must regard it as one of the circumstances most painful to the Sacred Heart of our loving Redeemer, in the betrayal of Judas, that neither the affectionate appeal of his Divine Master—“*Friend, why comest thou hither?*” nor the fears of judgment, had any effect in overcoming his obstinate impenitence, until, in despair, “*he hanged himself with a halter*” (xxvii. 5), and his bowels bursting asunder, his soul descended to its destined place in hell (Acts i. 25).

“*Then they came up, and laid hands on Jesus,*” &c. Here may be inserted what is recorded by St. John (xviii. 4-9), viz., after Judas had kissed his Divine Master, he retreated towards the armed band that accompanied them. Our Redeemer, then, came forward to meet them, and inquired, whom were they in search of; and then, He at once, declares Himself to be the party they sought, in reply to their answer, that it was “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” From this form of words, many infer that they did not know our Redeemer, and that they might have been struck with a kind of blindness similar to that inflicted on the sinful men of Sodom (Gen. xix. 11). On saying, “*I am He,*” they were at once, by an act of the Divine power, which showed them what little harm they could do Him, save in as far as He would permit it, thrown backwards on the ground.

After restoring to them their former strength, and again asking, “*Whom seek ye?*” and answering them, “*I am He,*” He cautions them not to molest His Apostles, showing greater solicitude for them than for Himself (John xviii. 8). After this, the soldiers and servants “*took Jesus and bound Him*” (John xviii. 12). The words mean, they were about laying hands on Him and binding Him. For, what is recorded in the following verse regarding Peter’s attempt to defend Him, took place before He was actually apprehended by the Tribune and the whole band (John xviii. 10-12).

51. We are told by St. Luke (xxii. 49), that His disciples, seeing what was to happen, asked our Lord, whether they would use the swords in His defence which they had with them (v. 38). Remembering that He told them to purchase swords (v. 36,) they probably imagined the time was now come to use them in defending Him, and in showing their fidelity; and most likely, “*one of them,*” whom St. John (xviii. 10) tells us, was “*Simon Peter,*” without waiting for our Redeemer’s reply, out of a sudden impulse of fervent zeal, at once, cut off the right ear of the servant of the High Priest, who, probably, was the most forward and ferocious of the band in attacking our Redeemer. This “*servant’s name was Malchus*” (John, *ibidem*). He is supposed to be one of those who smote our Redeemer upon the face, even after the miraculous cure performed in his favour. Then, our Redeemer, answering their question (Luke xxii. 51), said, “*suffer ye thus far,*” which is differently interpreted: Permit My enemies to exert their power over Me “*thus far,*” so as to apprehend Me; or, “*thus far,*” unto this hour, which is their hour, and the power of darkness; or, permit My defence to proceed “*thus far,*” that is, so far as the cutting of the ear off Malchus is concerned; but, proceed no farther. He, then, at once touching the ear of Malchus, which, from the word, “*touched,*” would seem not to have altogether fallen off, but to be merely hanging from him, perfectly restored it. From the foregoing, we can see the number of miracles our Redeemer performed on this occasion—1st. The blindness

and stupor inflicted on those sent to apprehend Him. 2nd. The prostrating of them on the ground. 3rd. His protecting His followers from any harm. 4th. The restoring of the ear of Malchus.

52. "*Then Jesus said to him: Put up thy sword in its place*" (St. John xviii. 11), "*the scabbard.*" He censures the conduct of Peter on threefold grounds—1st. On the general ground of the Divine prohibition to use the sword and shed blood without a justifying cause (Gen. ix. 6). To this improper use of the sword, appropriate and severe penalty is justly due. "*All that take the sword, shall perish by the sword.*" This only expresses the punishment due to such; or, if it refer to what actually occurs, it merely expresses what, commonly speaking, happens, as we know from sad experience. There may be exceptional cases, where those who imbrue their hands in the blood of their fellow-men, escape punishment; but these are exceptional cases. The general law, prohibiting the unjust effusion of human blood, to which the punishment here referred to is annexed, is promulgated (Gen. ix. 6), "*Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed.*" There is, of course, question both in these and in the words of our Redeemer in this verse, of the shedding of blood by private authority, and without some justifying cause. Hence, St. Peter, although seemingly justified, as acting in self-defence, still transgressed; because, he acted without waiting for the permission, and against the wishes of his Divine Master. Again, because his act bore the character of vindictiveness rather than of defence, which, humanly speaking, would be useless against such a multitude.

2ndly. He censures his mode of acting on the ground, that it was quite useless and uncalled for. Had He wished to be defended, He might "*have asked His Father,*" and the whole hosts of the heavenly armies, one of whom, in one night, slew 185,000 Assyrians (4 Kings, xix. 35), would be ready to defend Him.

53. "*Twelve legions of Angels,*" denote an immense number of the heavenly armies. The word, "*legion.*" is allusive to the Roman military system of computation. God is called, "*the Lord of Sabaoth.*" or, of hosts. "*Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him*" (Dan. vii. 10).

54. He censures Peter's conduct, 3rdly, on the ground that it was opposed to the decrees of His Heavenly Father, already foretold in the Scriptures, regarding the different circumstances of His death and Passion. Under this, may be included the reason assigned in St. John (xviii. 11), having reference to the special ordination of His Heavenly Father: "*The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*"

55. After having censured the act of Peter, our Redeemer now severely reproaches His enemies, and conveys to them, that all the power they are about exerting against Him, was owing to His having voluntarily and freely submitted to it Himself.

You are come out with swords and clubs to apprehend me, and you avail yourselves of the darkness of night, coming furnished with lanterns and torches to apprehend Me, as if I were a nightly robber. I have not acted any such part. The robber always seeks the darkness to conceal himself, whereas, "*I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple.*" Our Redeemer makes no mention of the miracles He wrought in their favour. He merely refers to the doctrines of salvation He dealt out to them. He did so in the day, in the very temple, where they had jurisdiction; where, if they wished, they could apprehend Him; however, they did nothing of the sort.

56. But their having refrained from apprehending Him in the temple, and their seizing on Him in the darkness of the night, headed by His own traitorous Apostle, and the other circumstances of His arrest (*"all this was done"*), were permitted by God, in order that the several prophecies regarding them in SS. Scripture might be accomplished. These words, which St. Matthew records here historically, were spoken by our Redeemer Himself, as we learn from St. Mark (xiv. 49). They have partly the same meaning as those recorded by St. Luke (xxii. 53), *"but this is your hour, and the power of darkness;"* as if it were meant to convey, that if they abstained from laying violent hands upon Him heretofore, it was because He did not permit them; but that now, in accordance with the pre-arranged decrees of God, recorded and predicted in the ancient Scriptures, He submitted, and permitted them and the demons by whom they were instigated, to vent all their rage and malice against Him. After having thus addressed them, He permitted them to apprehend Him, although His apprehension is, by anticipation, recorded in verse 50. The circumstance of His having touched the ear of Malchus, afterwards, shows He was not then apprehended or bound.

The painful anguish, which the mode of His apprehension must have caused our Redeemer, may be estimated from various circumstances—1st. He, who was Infinite Sanctity, was apprehended as a robber. 2ndly. He was apprehended by the most wicked characters, who bound, mocked, blasphemed Him, dragged Him to and fro, treating Him worse than a beast of burden. 3rdly. He was deserted by all His friends. 4thly. He was bound by heavy chains, whereby He wished to loose the chains of our sins. Whence Jeremias (Lam. iv. 20) says, *"The breath of our mouth, Christ the Lord, is taken in our sins."*

"Then the disciples, all leaving Him, fled." Here is fulfilled His prophecy, regarding them (verse 31). The entire eleven leaving Him, both in mind and body, giving up all trust and hope in Him, fled, and left Him alone in the hands of His enemies. Some say, they did not sin in this flight; or, at best, that they only sinned venially, since, they adhered to Him interiorly, and in their hearts. They fled, seeing they could be of no service to Him. But, however, having fled without consulting Him, whom they should have confidence in, after seeing Him prostrate His enemies, and having done this from the impulse of sudden fear and timidity; they therefore sinned lightly. These maintain, that the Apostles lost neither faith nor charity by so doing. Peter, however, and John returned (John xviii. 15, 16). The former followed Him, but only at a distance (verse 58).

St. Mark relates (xiv. 51), that a young man followed Him, and was obliged to fly from the fury of His enemies. Most likely, he records this to show, what treatment was in store for the Apostles, had they not consulted for their safety by flight, and also to give us an idea of the fury of His enemies, and the general trepidation caused by them. Who this *"young man"* was, cannot be determined for certain. That he was not one of the Apostles, seems very likely from his age, his dress, in which, probably, none of the Apostles appeared at the Last Supper, and besides, it is said, *"they all fled."* That he was a follower of our Redeemer, seems most likely, from the words of St. Mark, *"he followed Him,"* that is, Christ, and not the crowd. Moreover, he was about being apprehended, and maltreated, as one of His followers. Most likely, he was a servant of the villa, or country house, at Gethsemani. He must have conceived a very high idea of the sanctity of our Redeemer, whom he saw come there often to pray; and hearing the noise and concourse, he, probably, leaped out of bed, and went out, half dressed, to see what was the matter, and to ascertain what these midnight assailants meant to do with our Lord.

TEXT.

57. *But they holding Jesus led him to Caiphas the high-priest, where the scribes and the ancients were assembled.*

58. *And Peter followed him after off, even to the court of the high-priest. And going in he sat with the servants, that he might see the end.*

59. *And the chief-priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death:*

60. *And they found not, whereas many false witnesses had come in. And last of all there came two false witnesses;*

61. *And they said: This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and after three days to rebuild it.*

62. *And the high-priest rising up, said to him: Answerest thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee.*

63. *But Jesus held his peace. And the high-priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God.*

64. *Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

65. *Then the high-priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy;*

66. *What think you? But they answering said: He is guilty of death.*

67. *Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands,*

68. *Saying: Prophecy unto us, O Christ; who is he that struck thee?*

COMMENTARY.

57. Having been permitted by our Redeemer to apprehend Him, after He had restored the ear of Malchus, and had reproached them, as in preceding verse, "*they led Him to Caiphas the High Priest*" (St. Luke xxii. 54, "*to the High Priest's house*"), where the entire *Sanhedrin* were assembled, for the purpose of sitting in judgment on Jesus. It was the province of the *Sanhedrin* to judge questions of doctrine, and condemn false teachers, such as our Redeemer was alleged to be.

"The *Synedrion*, or great Council of the Jews, called by the Talmudists, *Sanhedrin*, consisted of seventy-two judges. Its president was always the High Priest . . . The assessors were—1st. The *Chief Priests*, that is, those who enjoyed the dignity of High Priest, as well as the heads of the twenty-four classes, into which the Priests were distributed. This class is referred to (verses 3 and 59). 2nd. The *Elders*, that is, the chiefs of the tribes, and heads of families. 3rd. The *Scribes*, or Doctors of the Law. However, not all the *Scribes*, nor all the *Elders* were members of the *Sanhedrin*; but, only those who obtained this dignity by election, or by the nomination of the Prince, or chief Governor of the State" (see Dixon's General Introduction, &c., vol. ii., p. 51). These several members of the Supreme Council "*were assembled*" together at the house of Caiphas, the High Priest, for the purpose of sitting in judgment on Jesus.

St. John states (xviii. 13), that they led Him to Annas, first. This they did, in order to gratify the High Priest, whose father-in-law Annas was. The High Priest greatly regarded Him, on account of their close connexion; and respected, on account of his age. Most likely, he was guided by his advice in the apprehension of our Redeemer. It may be that the house of Annas was on the way to that of Caiphas. Some even suppose that it was there Judas received the price of his treason, and that it was Annas stipulated with him to betray our Redeemer, for the promised sum. St. Cyril says so expressly. The traitor received the price of blood that very

night, as appears from his coming back the following morning and throwing it to them (xxvii. 5). And it seems most probable, it was not at the house of Caiphas he received it; for, had he been there, he would have betrayed Peter.

58. It is disputed whether the first denial of Peter occurred at the house of Annas or of Caiphas. For, St. John (xviii. 24), after describing the first denial of Peter, says, "*And Annas sent Him bound to Caiphas the High Priest,*" whence, some infer, that the events recorded (John xviii. 13-24), all took place at the house of Annas. But, the aorist form for *sent* (*ἀπεσταλκεν*), has a pluperfect sense, *had sent* (Beelen); and taking into account the narrative of the three other Evangelists, it is all but certain, that all Peter's denials occurred at the house of Caiphas.

St. John says this, at least virtually. For, he says (xviii. 16), that Simon Peter was admitted into the hall of the High Priest. It was the High Priest's maid first questioned him (v. 17). It was the High Priest first questioned our Lord concerning His doctrines and disciples (v. 19); and it is expressly stated before (v. 13), that Caiphas "*was the High Priest of that year.*" It is quite certain there could be only one actual High Priest among the Jews, whose duties, in case of any impediment which might prevent his officiating, were deputed, for a definite time, to another. Hence, Josephus tells us (*Antiq. Lib. 27, c. 8*), that, on that account, the duty of offering sacrifice was deputed, on a certain occasion, to Joseph, the son of Ellenus, on the part of Matthias, the High Priest, who could not himself officiate. The words of St. Luke (i. 2), "*under the High Priests, Annas and Caiphas,*" contain no proof to the contrary. The words may mean, that Annas *was* High Priest the year before, as Josephus informs us; and as John the Baptist, of whose preaching there is an account given by St. Luke, continued to preach penance for two years, he is, therefore, said to have preached "*under Annas and Caiphas, the High Priests.*" Or, it may be, that having been the most venerable among those who held the office of High Priest, and enjoying the greatest authority among his countrymen, Annas was mentioned with the actual Pontiff, who, very likely, was much guided by his counsel, as being always respected as High Priest, even after the actual discharge of the High Priest's functions were transferred to another. Hence, the words of St. John (xviii. 24), are but an express repetition of what he had virtually conveyed already; and he wishes to guard against any mistake, as to who the High Priest was, of whom there is question in the following verses, from verse 13 to verse 24. St. Cyril places verse 24 before verse 13 in that 18th chapter of St. John. The other Evangelists make no mention of Annas, because nothing worth recording occurred at his house.

"*But Peter followed Him afar off.*" Recovering from his first panic, Peter, from a feeling of love, followed Him, while the other Apostles were scattered abroad, like sheep without a shepherd. His love was not unmixed with fear. For, he followed "*from afar,*" lest he might be apprehended, as one of His disciples. Love impels him forward; fear keeps him at a distance.

"*Even to the court of the High Priest.*" How he obtained admittance there is recorded by St. John (xviii. 15, 16). He was introduced by one of our Redeemer's disciples, who was known to the High Priest. Who this disciple was is disputed. Some say, it was John the Evangelist; others, some one of our Redeemer's secret followers, who privately heard Him and believed in Him. "*The court*" was within the house, where the servants were awaiting their masters, who were sitting in council, in the innermost part of the house.

"*He sat with the servants.*" St. John (xviii. 18), tells us, they were warming themselves by a fire in the hall, because the weather was cold.

"*That he might see the end,*" that is, the issue of our Redeemer's trial and examination by the *Sanhedrin*, whether He would be condemned or absolved, and shape his conduct accordingly. From the result of such communication, we can see the danger of frequenting the occasions of sin, against truth or morals. Had St. Peter not associated with the servants of the members of the *Sanhedrin*, he might have escaped the humiliating crime, which he afterwards committed, of denying his Divine Master. So, if we *love* the danger, we shall surely perish. There are certain circumstances and moments of passion, in which the strength of Samson, or the sanctity of the Baptist, would not save us in the presence of occasions. David, the man according to God's heart, Solomon, endowed with wisdom from Heaven, Peter, the rock of God's Church, fell, and fell shamefully; because they did not avoid the occasions. All moments are not seasons of grace; and, if under ordinary temptation, grace is necessary to secure the victory, is not more than ordinary grace necessary to triumph in the circumstances now contemplated? And are we to expect that God will come to our rescue, by granting extraordinary graces, when we are voluntarily throwing ourselves into the very jaws of destruction? It would be *tempting God* to expect such miracles of His supernatural Providence, who created us without our help, but will not save us without our own co-operation. "*Qui creavit te sine te, non salvabit te sine te*" (St. Augustine).

59. The High Priest had interrogated our Lord concerning His doctrine (John xviii. 19), and failed to elicit anything from Him on this head whereon to found a plausible charge. Hence, the enemies of our Lord, anxious to preserve a show of justice, and desirous of some ostensible grounds for charging Him before Pilate, with some crime that would warrant a sentence of death, have now recourse to another artifice. In the absence of truthful witnesses, whom they despaired of finding, owing to our Redeemer's prudence and sanctity, known to the entire people, they "*sought false witnesses*;" they wished that these would appear as credible witnesses, in order to compass His death. They should have had some well grounded evidence of His guilt before arresting Him at all. Hence, their utter disregard for the very commonest forms of justice, in their mode of proceeding.

60. And, although many false witnesses presented themselves, they were of no use for the purpose of a conviction. "*And they found not,*" their evidence, besides other defects, being of a contradictory nature, as we learn from St. Mark (xiv. 55-59). How clearly was this declared beforehand, by the Psalmist, "*scrutati sunt iniquitates; defecerunt scrutantes,*" &c. (Psa. lxiii.); and also, "*insurrexerunt in me testes iniqui et mentita est iniquitas sibi.*" (Psa. xxvi.)

"*And last of all there came two false witnesses.*" Two witnesses, at least, were required by the Jewish law for evidence of any importance, "*in ore duorum vel trium testium stet omne verbum*" (Deut. xix. 15). Their evidence is specially mentioned, either because, it had reference to the mystery of the death of Christ, which was now being compassed, or, on account of its open and ridiculous falsity, so that we may infer from their evidence what sort of witnesses the others were.

61. "*I am able to destroy the temple of God, and in three days,*" &c. Their evidence was false—1st. Because they attributed to our Lord words He had not used. He did not say, "*I am able to destroy,*" &c., He only said, "*destroy this temple,*" that is, if you should destroy this temple, &c. Again, in Mark (xiv. 58), are inserted the words, "*made with hands,*" which words He did not use. Nor did He say, "*I will rebuild*;" but, "*I will raise it up*" (John ii. 19). 2ndly. It was false, inasmuch as they gave

the words of our Redeemer a false construction. They interpreted of the temple of Jerusalem, what He meant to be understood of His own body (John ii. 21), the temple in which "*all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth corporally*" (Col. ii. 9). He gave them, when asking for a sign of His power, the greatest proof of Divine omnipotence, viz., His resurrection from the grave, after having been there for three days. But, He did this in an enigmatical manner, as He was addressing cavillers, who were only bent on catching Him in His words; and He did not wish to speak more plainly, lest it might interfere with His death, which, by the decree of God, the Jews were permitted to inflict on Him. St. Mark (xiv. 59), says, "*these witnesses did not agree,*" which, very probably, means, looking to the Greek. καὶ ὅσαι αἱ μαρτυρίαι οὐκ ᾔσταν, their evidence was not *equal* to securing a conviction. All that could be said, at most, of His words was, that they contained a harmless boast, doing injury to no one.

62. "*The High Priest rising up,*" as if to convey, that a subject of the vastest importance was under consideration. He rose up also, according to the opinion of St. Jerome, from rage at seeing the insufficiency of the evidence, and also at seeing that our Redeemer, by His silence, as if He regarded such evidence as undeserving of a reply, gave no pretext for strengthening, from the distortion of His words in self defence, the evidence already adduced, which was utterly insufficient to secure a conviction. He utterly forgot the calm composure of the judge, in thus rising up to question our Divine Redeemer. Judges usually occupy a sitting posture. It is held by some that here the High Priest acted in the capacity of a Priest of the synagogue, where men spoke in a standing posture (Luke iv. 16).

"*Answerest Thou nothing?*" &c. In proposing this question, this wicked judge affected to believe that the absurd evidence given was important, and deserving of a reply. Hence, in a state of irritation at the course things were taking, he wishes to elicit some answer from our Redeemer, on which to ground some charge. If there be any miscreant on this earth greater than another, it is the corrupt, partisan judge, who, forgetful of God—the just Judge of all who shall judge him justly in turn—dead to every feeling of moral sense, blinded by sectarian bigotry, or a hatred of all religion, shows, by his very manner in passing an unjust sentence—at times, furiously impetuous; at times, deliberately slow—the bent of his wicked and perverse mind. Caiphas, in the present instance, furnishes a fair specimen of such. Would to God, that our day also had not to witness similar samples of judicial impartiality. Thank God, they are the exceptions.

63. "*But, Jesus held His peace,*" because He knew the charges preferred against Him involved nothing deserving of death, and the evidence in support of them to be unmeaning; and He did not wish to evade death, now that His hour had arrived. How clearly had the Psalmist long before described our Redeemer's mode of acting on the occasion (Psa. xxxvii. 13, 14), "*They that sought evils to me spoke vain things . . . but, I, as a deaf man, heard not; and as a dumb man, not opening his mouth.*" Also (Psa. xxxviii.), "*I set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me.*" Our Redeemer teaches us by His silence, that we too ought silently to endure the calumnies of men, nor deign an answer to such as charge us with palpably false crimes, since our defence would only provoke them the more.

"*I adjure thee by the living God.*" Maddened at seeing that our Redeemer's continued silence had baffled all their efforts to ensnare Him in His words, and to found some accusation, even on the distorted interpretation of His language, the High Priest now comes to the chief point of accusation against Him, and in virtue of

his pontifical authority, as representative of the power of God, he rashly employs, by an excess of shocking impiety, what is most sacred in religion, the holy name of "*the living God*," to force our Redeemer to speak and say if He was not the Son of God.

He "*adjures*" Him, that is, he solemnly and publicly commands Him, in the presence of God, the witness as well as the judge of what was to be said, to say, if He were not "*the Christ*," &c. The word "*adjure*," has manifold meanings in SS. Scripture—1st. To make one swear. Thus, Abraham adjures his servant (Gen. xxiv. 2); Jacob adjures Joseph (Gen. i. 5). 2ndly. To devote one to Divine vengeance and malediction (1 Kings xiv. 27, 28). 3rdly. To bind one under some religious obligation, such as the fear of outraging religion, or of incurring the Divine vengeance, to do something commanded (3 Kings xxii. 16; Cant. ii. 7; iii. 8; v. 8; Acts xix. 13). Here, it is taken in this latter sense. The High Priest publicly and solemnly commands our Redeemer, in virtue of the obedience due to him, as Pontiff, and of the reverence and respect due to the name of God, to answer him. His object was not to discover the truth; but, to find matter for condemnation against Him, in any event. If He were still to maintain silence, it would be construed into disrespect to the High Priest, and irreverence towards God. If He answered, and did so *affirmatively*, He would be charged with disaffection to the Romans in affecting sovereign authority; and with blasphemous sacrilege in usurping the Divine dignity. If in the *negative*, He would be charged with falsely usurping these titles on former occasions, and lately allowing the people to greet Him with loud hosannas, and welcome Him as the Son and rightful heir of David.

"*If Thou be the Christ*," &c. By "*the Christ*," the High Priest understood, the long expected Messiah, the promised deliverer and King of Israel. By "*the Son of God*," he meant the natural, co-eternal, not merely the adopted, Son of God. The High Priest understood our Redeemer to have called Himself such, from His public teaching: "*I and the Father are one*," whence the Jews charged Him with making "*Himself equal to God*" (John x. 30-33), and from the confession of His followers (Matt. xvi.; John xi. 27). The question of the High Priest was twofold: one regarding "*the Christ*," which would involve the charge of disaffection to the Romans; the other regarding His Divinity, which would involve the guilt of blasphemy, and so He would be accused under both heads.

64. Our Redeemer, although He knew the High Priest had acted from malice, and not to secure the ends of justice, and also knew that His public profession of the truth, would be made the occasion of His condemnation; still, to show us, that when interrogated by public authority respecting our faith, we must not fail to confess it; and also to show that the name of God is to be honoured; and still more, to give us an example of obedience to authority, even when it is abused, so long as it only prescribes what is good, and proposes nothing wrong—at once answers, "*thou hast said it*," a mild way of asserting a thing without giving offence. Hence, in St. Mark it is, "*I am*" (xiii. 6).

"*Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God*," &c. Our Redeemer after asserting, in obedience to the command of the High Priest, and out of reverence for the name of God, and for the sake of publicly professing the truth, which He came on earth to proclaim to the world, that He was the Son of God, now intrepidly advances a most convincing proof in support of the same. "*Hereafter*," that is, when the hour of the power of darkness shall have passed, after His resurrection and ascension, "*they shall see*," that is, know and experience from the effects and wonderful proofs of His power. For, the reprobate

Jews shall not be blessed with the sight of the glory of God. They can only judge from the effects of *His power, that He sits at the right hand of God.*

"*The Son of man,*" whom they now despise as a weak man. "*Sitting on the right hand of the power of God,*" at the powerful right hand of God, equal to God in power and majesty. Then especially shall they conclude that He "*sits at the right hand,*" &c., that He is Himself God, the Son of God, when they shall see His glorious majesty "*coming in the clouds of heaven,*" surrounded with the entire host of the heavenly armies. Even His executioners shall see this (Apoc. i. 7). There is here a direct antithesis between "*the Son of man,*" in his present, lowly condition of accused, standing before an earthly judge; and "*the power of God,*" the majesty of Sovereign Judge, which He shall display at His second coming.

Who can fail here to admire the intrepid magnanimity of our Blessed Lord, when, in the midst of His enemies, He menaces them, who are now sitting in judgment on Him, and bent on condemning Him unjustly to death, with the terrors of the dreadful judgment He shall one day pronounce on the impious, in the Valley of Josaphat.

The adversative particle, "*nevertheless,*" has nothing here expressed to correspond with it. The corresponding member is implied. It is expressed by St. Luke (xxii. 67), "*If I shall tell you, you will not believe me; but you shall see,*" &c. By some it is maintained, that the corresponding Greek word ($\pi\lambda\eta\nu$), is not adversative at all here, that it only signifies, *nay more*, or some such.

65. The High Priest, desirous of such confession from the lips of our Divine Redeemer, as the grounds of a sentence of condemnation against Him, rising from his seat, "*rent his garments,*" to testify the intensity of his grief. The Jewish garments were so made that the upper part was loose, and whenever they rent their garments, they tore them asunder as far as the girdle, but no farther, for modesty's sake. It was quite usual with the ancients to express the strong emotions, particularly of *grief or indignation*, by thus rending their garments. The Jews, particularly, were in the habit of doing so when any terrible evil occurred—Jacob (Gen. xxxvii. 30-34); Josue (Numb. xiv. 6), &c. This they did, particularly on the occasion of the greatest of evils, viz., blasphemy; Ezechias (4 Kings xix. 1); Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 18). Here, the High Priest rends his garments, not precisely out of grief for the outrage offered to God, which he hypocritically feigned to deplore, but for the purpose of inciting those present against Jesus. His conduct seemed to point out still more strongly the occurrence of some unheard of calamity, since it was forbidden to the High Priest to rend his garments (Lev. xxi. 10). Hence, the fact of his doing so here in violation of the law, shows that some uncommon calamity must have occurred. By some (Benedict XIV., Calmet, &c.), it is maintained that the prohibition in Leviticus had reference only to private grief, and when the Pontiff was clad in his sacerdotal garments, and in the temple; but that, on occasions of public sorrow, the High Priest might rend his garments (1 Mach. xi. 71).

"*He hath blasphemed.*" Without waiting for a calm discussion, regarding the nature of our Redeemer's offence, this corrupt judge, forgetting his office, as judge, at once charges Him with the guilt of blasphemy, for asserting that He was the Son of God, and the long expected Messiah, thus claiming the honour due to God and to Christ, and He calls on the other judges to act the part of accusers.

"*What further need have we of witnesses?*" This shows the impiety of Caiphas, who acts not as judge, but as accuser. "*Behold now you have heard the blasphemy,*" as if to say, the case is too evident to admit of any discussion whatever. These

words betray the inward joy Caiphas felt at having secured a pretext for condemning our Redeemer.

66. "*What think you?*" The question regards not *His guilt*, which the High Priest asserted to be beyond discussion, but, the *punishment*; to *what punishment* do you sentence Him for this manifest crime of blasphemy?

"*They answering,*" with one voice, said, "*He is guilty of death,*" that is, deserving of death, which was the punishment awarded by the law to blasphemers (Lev. xxiv. 16). The special kind of death marked out in the law was stoning; but, as they were determined on subjecting Him to the most cruel and ignominious death of the cross, they refrain from saying, "*He deserves, that all the multitude would stone Him*" (Lev. xxiv. 16).

67. "*Then.*" According to the more probable opinion, after our Redeemer was condemned at night, the Council broke up, as it was to be assembled again the following morning (xxvii. 1). In the meantime, and during the night, what is here recorded, occurred. St. Matthew records all things fully, and in their proper order. There are, however, commentators who hold that what is recorded here, from verse 59, to this, regarding the interrogation by the High Priest, the cruel treatment of our Blessed Lord, in the hall of Caiphas, occurred only after the Council was assembled on the following morning (xxvii. 1); that St. Matthew, therefore, records this by anticipation and out of order; and that all from verse 59 to this should be placed in order after verse 1 of c. xxvii. But there was a twofold Council held, at each of which our Redeemer was interrogated—one at night, after our Lord's apprehension, when He was interrogated, in the first instance, by the High Priest; and another in the morning (Luke xxii. 66), at which all the Chief Priests and ancients of the people attended. To this, most likely, the High Priest summoned all, even those who might be absent from the meeting of the previous evening. After the first meeting, when our Lord was interrogated, as recorded here, the events here mentioned about our Lord's contumelious treatment, occurred during the night. After the second (Luke xxii. 66, &c.), at which He was also questioned, condemned as a blasphemer and rebel, He was delivered up to Pilate to be condemned to the death of the cross.

"*They spit in His face,*" a great mark of disrespect, and the grossest of insults. (Num. xii.; Deut. xxv.) St. Luke says (xxii. 63), it was "*the men that held Him,*" that did so. St. Mark insinuates, that some of the Council did so; for, he pointedly says, "*some began to spit on Him . . . and the servants struck Him,*" thereby implying, that others, besides servants, offered Him other indignities.

"*And buffeted Him,*" that means, that they struck Him with *clenched hands*, or, with *fists*, in every part of His body.

"*And others struck His face with the palms of their hands.*" The former indignity caused Him severe pain. This slapping of Him in the face, besides being, probably, very painful, from the violence with which it was inflicted, contained also the greatest indignity and insult that could be offered a man.

68. "*Saying: Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee.*" In order fully to understand this, it should be borne in mind, as we have it recorded in St. Mark (xv. 65), Luke (xxii. 64), that they blindfolded Him, and, treating Him as a laughing-stock, and, as a fool, they began to question Him, to prophecy, who was it that struck Him, at different times. These words contain a sneering taunt at His pretensions to

be a Prophet. The word, "*prophecy*," signifies, not merely to predict future events but also to disclose secret and hidden things, in which latter sense the word is employed here. They also added other blasphemous taunts, deriding and insulting Him. "*And many other things, blaspheming, they said against Him*" (Luke xxii. 65). Oh! who can conceive all that our innocent Redeemer suffered during that dismal night, when He was abandoned, or rather, for our sakes, abandoned Himself, to the vile crew of miscreants, in the hall of Caiaphas, who employed all the devices which their rage and refined malice could invent, to abuse, vilify, and torment Him. Who is it, that was thus treated? WHEREFORE, and by WHOM? How graphically was His condition described beforehand, by the Prophet Isaiah (l. 6), "*I have given My body to the strikers, and My cheeks to them that plucked Me.*"

TEXT.

69. *But Peter sat without in the court; and there came to him a servant-maid, saying: Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean.*

70. *But he denied before them all, saying: I know not what thou sayest.*

71. *And as he went out of the gate, another maid saw him, and she said to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth.*

72. *And again he denied with an oath: That I know not the man.*

73. *And after a little while they came that stood by, and said to Peter: Surely thou also art one of them: for even thy speech doth discover thee.*

74. *Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. And immediately the cock crew.*

75. *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which he had said: Before the cock crew thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth, he wept bitterly.*

COMMENTARY.

69. "*But Peter sat without in the court.*" After describing consecutively, the examination and condemnation of our Saviour, and the cruel mockery He was subjected to in the hall of Caiaphas, the Evangelist now returns to the history of the denial of Peter, to whom He referred (v. 58), and, without interruption, describes the triple denial, although occurring at three distinct periods, and at different intervals.

"*Peter sat.*" St. John assures us, "*he stood*" (xviii. 18), but, both accounts are true; he sat and stood alternately, "*without in the court,*" that is, in the hall within the house, which, although within the house, was "*without,*" relative to those who were in an inner chamber, sitting in judgment on Jesus Christ. How St. Peter was introduced, is described (John xviii. 15, 16): "*A servant maid.*" She was "*portress*" (xviii. 17), and observed all who went in and came out, and from the confused, frightened appearance of Peter, which was so strongly reflected from the fire at which the servants sat and stood, warming themselves, she conjectured that he was one of our Redeemer's followers, and said, first to the bystanders, "*This man was also with Him*" (Luke xxii. 56). She, next, petulantly addressing Peter himself, asked him, as St. John has it, "*Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?*" (xviii. 17); or, as we have it here recorded by St. Matthew, "*thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean.*" He is called, "*the Galilean,*" being from Nazareth, the place of His education, which was in Galilee; it was also a term of reproach, Galilee being a most contemptible province (John vii. 52). Hence, they speak of Him as "*the Galilean,*" out of contempt, for His pretending to be a prophet, since no prophet comes from Galilee

(John vii. 52), and, by it, they imply also, that He was a seditious favourer and follower of Judas the Galilean.

70. "*I know not what thou sayest.*" The words used by the other Evangelists convey the same meaning—(Luke), "*I know Him not;*" (John), "*I am not.*" Peter might have employed these several forms of expression. Here, St. Peter grievously sinned against the confession of faith, being terrified by the empty taunts of a silly maid. St. Mark, who alone records the prediction of our Redeemer, regarding the second crowing of the cock, also alone informs us, that, after Peter's first denial, when he went out of the hall, "*the cock crew*" (xiv. 68), in order to show that the prediction of our Lord, regarding the second crowing of the cock, was verified; and he refers to Peter's having gone out, "*before the Court,*" to convey to us, that Peter could have thus more easily heard the crowing of the cock there, than amidst the tumult and noise in the hall.

71. "*And as he went out of the gate,*" or, the door, which led from the hall to the porch, to which egress St. Mark refers (xiv. 68). From the Greek, *εἰς τὸν πύλον*, it appears, that there is question of the door leading from the hall to the porch. "*Another maid saw him,*" &c.

72. "*And he again denied with an oath, I do not know the man.*" This denial did not take place immediately, in reply to the observation of the maid servant; but, as we learn from St. John (xviii. 25), this denial occurred at the fire, after Peter had returned, and after one of the bystanders (Luke xxii. 58), or more than one of them (John xviii. 25), taking up the observation made by the maid, joined her in charging him with being one of the disciples. He, on this second occasion, in order to free himself from suspicion, denied, on oath, that he knew the man. As the second fall of a man is ordinarily greater than the first, so, Peter's second denial was more heinous than the first, since to it he added perjury. The extenuation of Peter's guilt, put forward by some holy Fathers, St. Hilary, &c., viz., that he only said, he knew *not the man*, but knew Him as *God*, cannot be admitted. For, as St. Jerome well remarks, this would be defending Peter at the expense of his Divine Master, who would, if this defence, were admitted, be guilty of a lie, when He said, "*thrice shalt thou deny Me.*"

73. "*And after a little while,*" that is, "*about the space of an hour after*" (Luke xxii. 59)—there was an interval of an hour between the first and second crowing of the cock—"they that stood by came, and said to Peter: Surely . . . for even thy speech doth discover thee." He spoke with the accent of a Galilean.

74. Peter, seeing himself pressed on every side, and terrified at the allusion to the outrage committed in the garden, which was calculated to bring upon him vengeance, and provoke retaliation, at once begins to curse and swear, *i.e.*, to invoke upon his head all sorts of malediction, if he knew the man. It is deserving of remark, that, as Peter's confident declarations of fidelity to his Divine Master increased in strength and intensity (vv. 33, 34), so do his denials increase in intensity. He first simply denies. 2ndly. He denies, on oath. 3rdly. He does so, with oaths and imprecations of all sorts. In the first denial, he said, "*I am not*" (John xviii. 17); "*I know Him not*" (Luke xxii. 57); "*I know not what thou sayest,*" here, and Mark xiv. 68. In the second denial, he employed an oath. In the third, he added repeated execrations.

"*And immediately.*" Luke says, "*while he was yet speaking*" (xxii. 60) "*the cock*

crew," thus verifying the prediction of our Redeemer, that *before* the cock would crow twice, he would have thrice denied Him.

75. "*And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which He said,*" &c. St. Luke (xxii. 61), says, "*The Lord, turning, looked on Peter, and Peter remembered the word,*" &c. Our Lord looked on him *interiorly*, with the eye of mercy, reminding him of the magnitude of his crime, and of His own prediction, and inspiring him with true sorrow and compunction. It may be, that He looked on him *corporally*; since it was likely, after the assembly broke up at night, in the interior of the house, that Jesus was left in the hall, to be abused and mocked by the servants; or, we may also suppose that, if He were left inside, the door being open, our Lord looked at Peter in such a way as to remind him of his fall, and urge him to repentance. "*And going forth, he wept bitterly.*" He did not wish, nor did he deem it congruous, to weep in presence of the enemies of our Redeemer, because this would betray him, or, rather, because he could weep more freely in solitude, which is best suited for penance. Moreover, their presence was the cause of his denial of his Divine Master. Hence, at once he fled the occasion of his former sin. "*He wept bitterly,*" at the thought of his sins, particularly his pride, his foolish boasting and presumption, when his Divine Master forewarned him of his fall, and still more, at the recollection of his shameful denial of his Divine Master. The ancient historians of the life of St. Peter, assure us, that his penance and bitter tears were not of a passing kind; that every day, during his entire life, he bitterly wept and deplored his fall.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist records the second meeting of the Sanhedrin, early next morning, when they decided on having our Lord sent before the Governor, in order to obtain his sanction for the ignominious death they desired to inflict on Him (1-2). The fruitless repentance and sad end of the traitor, Judas (3-5). The hypocritical affectation of religious scruples on the part of the High Priests, who would not have the price of blood devoted to any other than charitable purposes, viz., the purchase of a burying-place for strangers, thus fulfilling the prophecy of *Zacharias* relating to this very subject (6-10). The questioning of our Lord by Pontius Pilate, the Governor, who himself seemed to attach no weight to the clamours and false charges on the part of the Jews - the great wonder which our Redeemer's silence, under the circumstances, caused him (11-14). Pilate's idea of rescuing our Lord out of their hands, by proposing Him or Barabbas, as equally the object of the people's choice. The testimony borne in favour of our Lord by Pilate's wife. The preference given to Barabbas, the robber and murderer - the loud call for our Lord's crucifixion. The release of Barabbas, and the sentence of the death of the cross passed on our Lord by Pilate, though this weak, temporizing judge, who had recourse to the most humiliating, painful expedients to have Him released, was manifestly convinced of His innocence. The insulting treatment received by our Lord at the hands of the soldiers in Pilate's hall, who afterwards lead Him out for crucifixion (15-31). His bitter crucifixion, rendered still more bitter by the circumstances that accompanied it. The bitter potion given Him to drink. His associates in suffering, two thieves, one placed each side of Him. The division of His garments. The sneers and taunts of His enemies, reproaching Him in the midst of His torments (32-44). The darkness that brooded over the earth from the sixth till the ninth hour. His death, which occurred in a premature manner (45-50). The wonderful events that occurred in connexion with it. The testimony of the centurion on witnessing them, in favour of His Divinity (51-54). The taking down of His sacred body from the cross, by *Joseph of Arimathea*, who also bestowed on it the rites of decent sepulture in his own new tomb, hewed out of a rock (55-61). The application to Pilate by the Chief Priest and Pharisees for a band of soldiers to guard the sepulchre, which, being granted, they also adopt the additional precaution of affixing the public seal to it (62-66).

TEXT.

AND when morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus, that they might put him to death.

2. And they brought him bound, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

3. *Then Judas, who betrayed him, seeing that he was condemned; repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients,*

4. *Saying: I have sinned, in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to a? look thou to it.*

5. *And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed: and went and hanged himself with a halter.*

6. *But the chief priests having taken the pieces of silver, said: It is not lawful to put them into the corbona, because it is the price of blood.*

7. *And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field, to be a burying-place for strangers.*

8. *For this cause that field was called haceldama, that is, the field of blood, even to this day.*

9. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was prized, whom they prized of the children of Israel.*

10. *And they gave them unto the potter's field, as the Lord appointed to me."*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And when morning was come.*" The time is more precisely determined by the other Evangelists: "*And straightway in the morning*" (Mark xv. 1); "*And as soon as it was day*" (Luke xxii. 66). "*All the chief priests and ancients of the people*"—SS. Mark and Luke add, "*and the Scribes.*" These three orders constituted the Jewish Sanhedrin or Supreme Council of seventy-two Judges or Senators. "*Held a council against Jesus.*" St. Mark (xv. 1), speaks of "*the whole council.*" Most likely, the Council that condemned our Lord on the previous evening, having been dissolved, Caiphas took care to summon all the members of the *Sanhedrin* against the following morning, so that the increased number of assessors, and the day time alone suited for judicial proceedings, would add greater solemnity and weight to the judgment of the preceding night, which condemned Jesus to death, and thus Pilate could hardly resist their united authority, "*to put Him to death.*" St. Matthew, who omits giving a full account of the gross indignities to which our Redeemer was subjected on the preceding night in the hall of Caiphas, omits all account of what occurred at this second, or morning meeting, probably, because it might be only a repetition of what he before described as having occurred before the judges on the preceding occasion. We are, however, informed by St. Luke (xxii. 66, &c.), that they questioned Him, "*If thou be the Christ, tell us.*" Although some expositors, with Maldonatus, are of opinion, that St. Matthew (xxvi. 63, &c.), anticipates what should be described here; the general opinion, however, is, that all that St. Matthew there describes occurred at night, and that the same was again repeated in the morning, as recorded. (St. Luke xxii. 66, &c.) The three Evangelists describe the mocking of our Lord as occurring at night, and after He declared Himself to be the Christ (Matt. xxvi. 67). "*Then they spat in His face,*" &c., when He was condemned to death for blasphemy. The same captious question, proposed the preceding night by the High Priest (xxvi. 63), was next morning repeated in presence of all the Council (Luke xxii. 66). So that whether He denied or asserted it—and He did mildly, but firmly, assert it (Luke xxii. 66)—it would prove equally a subject of accusation before Pilate.

2. Having then elicited from Him a confession, which they regarded as a grave charge, both on religious grounds, viz., blasphemy against God; and civil grounds, viz., affectation of supreme temporal power, and sedition against Rome, "*they brought Him*—St. John (xviii. 28), says, "*from Caiphas*"—bound." Most likely, they

had removed the cords which bound Him, when questioned before the Sanhedrin, and then, again, they bind Him before leading Him forth. St. Mark (xxvii. 1), says, they "*bound Jesus.*" "*And delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.*" This they did, because, most likely, now that Judea was reduced to a Roman province, and ruled, like other provinces, by a Roman Governor, the power of life and death was vested in him alone (John xviii. 31), and the instances in which they put men to death, were only tumultuous, riotous proceedings, in which the multitude exceeded their legitimate power, as in the case of Stephen and others; but such proceedings were not legal. Or, if we suppose the Jews to have still the power of life and death in certain cases, they had not the power of inflicting death by crucifixion, on our Redeemer. Hence, they required Pilate's sanction to inflict on Him this kind of death, introduced by the Romans. They also wished to make it appear, that parties no way concerned with our Redeemer, judicially put Him to death, and had Him crucified, as infamous, between two robbers. Stoning was the death marked out in the law for Him, as a blasphemer. But crucifixion could be inflicted by Pilate. They also wished to remove from themselves the stigma of having acted against Christ, from envy. The chief reason, however, is that assigned by St. John (xviii. 31). They had no power themselves to put Him to death. But God permitted all this, to verify His predictions, that His Son should be tortured even by the Gentiles. So that as He redeemed all, Jew and Gentile, all should be accessory to His death. By a just judgment of God, as they delivered up the Son of God to the Romans, to be crucified; they were, in turn, delivered over to the iron legions of Vespasian and Titus, to be butchered and banished, and their city levelled to the dust.

3. Judas, now seeing that our Redeemer was condemned by the Jews, and declared worthy of death; and knowing, from their determined hostility towards Him, that they would insist on Pilate's acceding to their wicked desires, "*repenting himself,*" was sorry for what he did. Most likely, he hoped that our Redeemer would either confute their silly charges; or, whether miraculously, or, in some other way, would extricate Himself out of their hands. Now, seeing that it was otherwise; as His death was most certainly determined on, he repented of what he did, not, however, with that repentance which involved hope in the Divine mercy, but, from a feeling of remorse and torturing pain. The devil, who entered into him, and instigated him, now opens his eyes to the magnitude of his guilt, in order to drive him to despair. Hoping to rescind the wicked contract which he made with them, and that by giving up the price of his Master, they might, in turn, set Him free, he "*brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests,*" &c.

4. "*Saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,*" that is, an innocent man. He did not leave the Jews the extenuating excuse, that in crucifying our Redeemer, they had the testimony of one of His own bosom friends, who was best acquainted with His manner of life. His very traitor bears testimony in His favour, so that, besides the testimony of His doctrine, and good works, and miracles, even this last testimony borne Him by Judas and Pilate's wife, renders them inexcusable.

"*But, they said: What is that to us? look thou to it.*" This shows the obstinate malice of the Jews. They insinuate, that they cared not whether Jesus was innocent or guilty; having Him now in their power, they are determined, at all hazards, to wreak vengeance on Him. "*What is that to us?*" They make light of co-operating in the death of a man, declared by His very betrayer to be innocent

5. "*And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple.*" Most likely, while some of the priests had proceeded to Pilate's house to accuse Jesus, others proceeded to the temple for the discharge of their priestly functions, on this solemn festival; and when Judas had confessed his guilt, and brought back the money to the Chief Priests, &c., at either the house of Caiphas or Pilate, and they paying no heed to him, refused accepting the money, or rescinding the contract, he, at once proceeded to the temple, and threw the money there at the feet of the ministering priests, so as to rescind the contract, as far as he was concerned; so that the money—which, if thrown away in the house of Pilate or Caiphas, would be gathered up by the servants, and never restored—would be gathered up by the priests, and given back to those who gave it to him; and being flung into the temple, it would be sacred, the price of innocent blood, unfit for profane use.

"*And went and hanged himself with a halter.*" St. Peter (Acts i 18), describes his death rather differently, and still more circumstantially, "*and being hanged, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out,*" the result of which was (v. 25), "*that he might go to his own place,*" that is, to his destined place in hell's torments. The Greek in Acts (1-18) for, "*being hanged*" (*πρηνὴς γενομένος*), should rather be translated, "*being precipitated headlong.*" Hence, some expositors find a difficulty in reconciling St. Peter's account of Judas' death, with that of St. Matthew, *ἀπελθὼν ἀπηγγέστο*, which is commonly rendered, "*going, he hanged himself.*" Both accounts are perfectly consistent; and taken conjointly, both, most probably, give a full account of the manner of Judas' death. Going, he hanged himself, as did Achitophel before him, who was a type of him as to his crime and fate, (2 Kings xvii. 23); and while hanging for some time, the rope either breaking, or giving way, *he was precipitated headlong*, and falling on a hard protruding substance, he burst asunder, and his bowels gushed forth; or, it may be, that being suspended, his head downwards, owing to the exertion, he became swollen, and his bowels burst forth. Either supposition will reconcile the narrative of St. Matthew here, and of St. Peter (Acts 1-18). St. Matthew records the *kind* of death, whereby Judas *sought* to put an end to his miserable life; St. Peter, the mode in which he actually did die, the latter resulting directly from the former.

It is to be observed, that although Judas, apparently had the different ingredients of penance, he had it not, however, in reality. His *sorrow* did not contain the *hope of pardon*. It was rather dark despair. Neither was his confession, "*I have sinned,*" &c., made to those to whom alone was granted the power of absolving him: "*Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven.*" The Jewish priests had no such power.

6. These consummate hypocrites, who "*strain out a gnat and swallow a camel*" (Matt. xxiii. 24), scruple to employ for sacred purposes the price of blood, and make no scruple to unjustly shed that blood. The word, "*corbona,*" is a Syriac term, signifying a *gift*, and most commonly, a *gift presented to the sacred treasury*. Again it denotes the *treasury* itself, or *place* set apart in the temple for pious offering, which was in the Court of the women. There was no prohibition in the law against receiving such money. There was a prohibition against receiving the wages of a strumpet, or the price of a dog (Deut. xxiii. 18), and by analogy, they inferred that the price of blood should be equally objectionable and prohibited.

7. After due deliberation, these hypocrites, affecting a charitable disposition for the poor, their object in reality being to perpetuate the infamous end of our Redeemer, delivered over to death by one of His own disciples, of which the purchased burying

ground would serve as a lasting monument, "*bought with them* (the thirty pieces of silver), *the potter's field*," so called, either because it belonged to some potter; or, because the soil was employed for pottery purposes, and being now exhausted, and consequently, of scarcely any value, was sold for the trifling sum of thirty pieces of silver, "*To be a burying place for strangers*," whether foreign Jews who resorted to Jerusalem, and had no burial place of their own, as the inhabitants of Jerusalem had, who deemed it a great solace to be buried in the tombs of their fathers; or, more probably, to Gentile foreigners, who came in crowds to Jerusalem, and being regarded as impious, were not allowed to be buried with the faithful Jews. The application of the price of our Saviour's blood to the purchase of a cemetery for strangers, signified, that true rest is in store for those who, being *strangers* to the people of God, have obtained the rights of citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem, "*cives sanctorum*," &c. (Ephes. ii. 19), by sharing in the merits of the Cross of Christ, and by being buried with Him in baptism unto death (Rom. vi. 3, 4).

8. "*Wherefore, that field was called haceldama*," &c. The providence of God so ordained it, that what the Chief Priests meant to be a lasting monument of reproach to our Redeemer, would serve as an eternal monument of their crime, and especially of the treason of Judas; and tend to the glory of Jesus, as is insinuated by St. Peter (Acts i. 19). "*Haceldama*" is a Chaldaic term, signifying, "*the field of blood*," or, the field purchased for the blood money received for the betrayal of Jesus by His own apostate disciple, who, after declaring the innocence of his Master, in a fit of despair hanged himself with a halter.

9. The same was ordained by God for the verification and fulfilment of the ancient prophecies. "*By Jeremiah the prophet saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver*," &c. These words are not found in any part of Jeremiah; but, they are found substantially, and in sense, in the Prophet Zacharias, not according to the Septuagint; but, according to St. Jerome's version (xi. 12, 13). Hence, different commentators have differently recourse to several ways for accounting for the introduction of the name of Jeremiah here, instead of Zacharias. Some say, with Origen, that it arose from a mistake of copyists, who, owing to manuscript abbreviations, mistook, *Ιπποδ*, that is, *Ιερεμουν* for *Ζηροδ*, or, *Ζαχαριου*. Others, that the Evangelist only quoted the prophet in a general way; "*Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet, saying*," &c., without mentioning any particular prophet, a thing quite common in the Gospel of St. Matthew (i. 22; ii. 5, 15; xiii. 35, &c.); and that afterwards some one, wishing to particularize the prophet, wrote in the margin, "*Jeremias*," because Jeremiah "*bought a field*" (xxxii. 9). This marginal addition, in course of time, made its way into the text of all the Latin and most of the Greek copies. "*Jeremias*" was not found in the Syriac, nor in some Latin MSS. in the time of St. Augustine. The error of those who wrote Jeremiah instead of Zacharias in the margin, might be easily accounted for, inasmuch as the passage from Zacharias, according to the Septuagint, which alone was used by the Greek and Latin Churches before the time of St. Jerome, had hardly anything in common with the quotation here given by St. Matthew. Others say, that this prophecy might have been found in some of the prophecies of Jeremiah now lost. For, he wrote more books than we have now extant (2 Mach. ii. 1). Others, in some apocryphal writings of Jeremiah. The sacred writers quote from such occasionally. St. Paul is supposed to have done so (2 Tim. iii. 8), in reference to the names of the Egyptian magicians, Jannes and Mambres. St. Jerome assures us, he was shown by a Nazarene, a writing of

Jeremias, in which this quotation was found. The writing, however, was not canonical. Others suppose, that this prophecy of Jeremias was not written; but handed down, by the tradition of the Jews. Similar is that quoted by our Redeemer in reference to the Tower of Siloe (Luke xiii. 4).

Others, among whom is St. Augustine, &c., quoted by Benedict XIV. (de Festis, &c.), are of opinion, that the quotation is made up of two different members, one from Jeremias (xxxii. 9), relating to a field Jeremias purchased from his uncle's son, for "*seven staters and ten pieces of silver*," a sum different from that mentioned here; the other from Zacharias (xi. 12, &c.), having reference to the thirty pieces offered by the High Priest to Zacharias. The quotations, according to these interpreters, are not verbally taken from either prophet, but only the sense of them; and these also maintain, that St. Matthew quotes only one prophet, *Jeremias*, passing over Zacharias—a thing not unusual with the Evangelists, when giving a quotation from different prophets, as may be seen (Mark i. 2, 3), where, quoting a text, the first part of which is from Malachias, the other from Isaias, the Evangelist only mentions Isaias, without at all mentioning Malachias—however, the more common opinion is, in whatever way the introduction of the name of Jeremias may be accounted for, that the quotation of St. Matthew is substantially the same as the words of Zacharias (xi. 12, 13). In that passage of Zacharias, the Lord seeks for His wages—"bring hither *My wages*" (v. 12)—from the Jewish people, through the prophet, in return for the several benefits conferred on them; and He complains, at finding it so insignificant, as not to exceed in value thirty pieces of silver, &c. (See Zach. xi. 12, &c.) The command of God that the prophet would cast these thirty pieces to the statuary or potter, and its execution (Zach. xi. 13), looking to prophetic usage, are but a prediction of what was to happen at a future day, when the Chief Priests, instead of a suitable reward for the benefits conferred on their nation by Christ, gave Judas thirty pieces of silver to betray Him. These pieces Judas cast into the temple, and they were afterwards given to a poor potter as the price of his field. The words then mean: "*And they*"—the Chief Priests—"took the thirty pieces of silver"—which were cast into the temple—"the price of Him that was prized," viz., the Messiah, "*whom they prized of the children of Israel*," that is, whom those who were of the children of Israel, to whom He was sent, prized at so low a sum, the price of a common slave, "*and they gave them unto the potter's field, as the Lord had appointed to me*," that is, had commanded the Prophet Zacharias to do.

"*They took.*" In the Hebrew it is, "*I took.*" The prophet spoke in the first person to show, that he did what the Lord commanded him; the Evangelist, in the third person, to show that the priests had fulfilled, what the prophet practically prophesied in this matter. However, the Greek word, *ελαβον*, might be rendered in the first person, "*I took,*" &c. "*The price of Him that was valued,*" is ironically termed by the prophet (Zach. xi. 13), "*a handsome price.*" "*Of the children of Israel,*" that is, those who were of the children of Israel. Some expositors join these latter words with, "*the price of Him that was valued,*" thus: "*They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued of the children of Israel, whom they prized,*" at so low a price, "*pretium appetiati a filiis Israel quem appetiaverunt.*"

10. "*They gave them unto the potter's field.*" St. Matthew more clearly expresses the object of the prophet, who speaks in the first person: "*I cast them into the house of the Lord to the statuary*" (Zach. xi. 13). "*As the Lord appointed to me.*" These words are not found expressly in the prophet; but, they are found virtually there, inasmuch as it was by the command of God the prophet threw the thirty pieces of

silver in the temple to the statuary or potter; hence, he did as the Lord appointed. St. Matthew adds these words, to show, that all this did not happen by chance; but, by the express command and deliberate will of God, wishing beforehand to foreshadow and prophesy by act, what was to happen our Lord in the fulness of time.

TEXT.

11. *And Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, saying: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus saith to him: Thou sayest it.*

12. *And when he was accused by the chief priests and ancients, he answered nothing.*

13. *Then Pilate saith to him: Dost not thou hear how great testimonies they allege against thee?*

14. *And he answered him to never a word: so that the governor wondered exceedingly.*

15. *Now upon the solemn day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would.*

16. *And he had then a notorious prisoner, that was called Barabbas.*

17. *They therefore being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?*

18. *For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.*

19. *And as he was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man. For I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*

20. *But the chief priests and ancients persuaded the people, that they should ask Barabbas, and make Jesus away.*

21. *And the governor answering, said to them: Whether will you of the two to be released unto you? But they said, Barabbas.*

22. *Pilate saith to them: What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? They say all: Let him be crucified.*

23. *The governor said to them: Why what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying: Let him be crucified.*

24. *And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing: but that rather a tumult was made; taking water washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man: look you to it.*

25. *And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*

26. *Then he released to them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus delivered him unto them to be crucified.*

27. *Then the soldiers of the governor taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto him the whole band:*

28. *And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him.*

29. *And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews.*

30. *And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head.*

31. *And after they had mocked him, they took off the cloak from him, and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him.*

COMMENTARY.

11. "*And Jesus stood before the Governor.*" He "*stood,*" as one arraigned for trial, before Pilate, who governed Judea as President, in the name of the Emperor Tiberius.

After having described the tragical end of the unhappy Judas, the Evangelist now returns to the subject of our Redeemer's Passion. As each of the Evangelists has only recorded a part of the circumstances of the Life and Passion of our Lord, several circumstances are described by St. John (xix. 28-32), which are here omitted by St. Matthew, and which should be prefixed to this verse (11), as having taken place before what is recorded here. Pilate being no way moved by their general charges against our Lord, and their clamorous demands for His punishment, they then proceed to more specific charges, which are recorded by St. Luke (xxiii. 2). These are threefold, and all, so many gross calumnies. In Pilate's letter to Tiberius, in this cause of Christ, still extant (Hegesippus, Lib. 5), he states, that the Jews brought a *fourth charge* against our Lord, viz., that He practised magic, in virtue of which, He performed some miraculous wonders: "*In Beelzebub, the prince of devils,*" &c. (Matt. xii. 24.) The accusation relating to His having affected sovereign power, was most calculated to affect Pilate, who was charged with maintaining the cause and sovereignty of the Romans. It was only after hearing these specific charges from the Jews, whom Pilate addressed outside his house, as they would not enter, lest they might be defiled and prevented from partaking of the Pasch (John xix. 28), he returns to the Governor's hall, within the house, where our Lord had been left, and, passing over the other charges as perhaps frivolous, and no way concerning him, as Governor, asks Him, "*Art Thou the King of the Jews?*"—this being the only charge that concerned him as representative of Cæsar, whose authority it might prejudice, as it involved, in some sense, the grave and practical charge of preaching up the refusal to pay tribute to Cæsar. For, it followed, naturally, that whoever aimed at sovereign power, as here imputed to our Lord, would interdict the giving of tribute to any other claimant to the same supreme power. Origen remarks, that the way in which Pilate put this question, showed clearly he gave no credit to it, as if he said: Is it possible that you, who are so lowly and contemptible among your fellow-countrymen, could pretend to be the king so long and anxiously expected by them?

"*Jesus saith to him: Thou sayest it,*" a modest form of asserting a thing; "*thou sayest what is true.*" Before these words should be placed, in the order of narration, those recorded by St. John (xviii. 34-37), "*sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it to thee of Me?*" Was it from his own knowledge, or the suggestion of others, he asked such a question? Our Redeemer thus insinuated, that Pilate was only reciting the charges of His enemies; and that Pilate himself, although bound in duty to see that no one should usurp the authority of Cæsar, had no reason, although so long Governor of Judea, to suspect Him of the offence imputed to Him. Pilate being somewhat irritated by this question, at once tells Him, that He, as a stranger, could know nothing about the king, or the characteristics of the king, whom the Jewish nation was so anxiously expecting; and that it was His own nation, and its chiefs, that delivered Him over for judgment. "*Am I a Jew?*" "*Thy own nation, and the Chief Priests . . . what hast Thou done?*" (John xviii. 35). Seeing that Pilate had questioned Him, not captiously, but with a view of eliciting the truth, our Redeemer replies, that His kingdom is not of such a nature as would cause Pilate any uneasiness; that His kingdom "*was not of this world,*" &c. (John xix. 36.) Then Pilate asks Him, "*Art Thou then a king?*" (v. 37), be your kingdom of whatever description it may. Our Redeemer answers, as in this verse (11), "*thou sayest that I am a king;*" and He further states the object of His mission, which was "*to give testimony to the truth*" (John xviii. 37).

Pilate then asks, "*what is truth?*" and, as if he cared not for an answer,

felt no way concerned or interested in the whole affair, he at once, abruptly, without awaiting a reply, goes out to the Jews and tells them, "*I find no cause in Him*" (John xviii. 38).

12. "*When He was accused by the Chief Priests,*" &c. St. Mark says (xv. 3), "*they accused Him in many things,*" confiding more in the multitude of their charges and in their violent clamour, than in the truth of what they advanced against Him.

"*He answered nothing*" Our Redeemer was silent for several reasons—1st. Because the charges brought against Him were manifestly false and undeserving of a reply. 2nd. Because a reply would irritate the Jews still more. 3rd. Lest He might be discharged by Pilate, and thus the decree of God, wishing Him to make atonement for the sins of man by the death of the cross, would be frustrated; and, finally, to make atonement by His silence for all the sins of evil speech of which mankind were guilty; and to leave us an example of suffering patiently in similar circumstances. He also wished to fulfil the prophecies (Isaiah liii. 7), "*like a sheep brought to the slaughter . . . and shall not open His mouth.*"

13. The words of this verse evidently insinuate, that Pilate brought our Redeemer outside to hear the crimes laid to His charge by the Jews, and then asked, what He would reply to the accusations.

14. "*And He answered not . . . so that the Governor wondered exceedingly.*" He admired His meekness, contempt of death, and elevation of soul in such perilous circumstances, and became convinced of His innocence; so that he endeavoured, by all means, to set Him free, saying, "*he could find no cause in Him*" (Luke xxiii. 4). He wondered greatly to see a man, who could so easily justify Himself, observe silence in such circumstances; for, it was evident His enemies were actuated by rage, and could prove nothing against Him.

But they, seeing this, became more earnest in their accusations, "*saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place*" (Luke xxiii. 5). By alluding to Galilee, they wished to inspire Pilate with terror, lest sedition might be excited by this man, Pilate himself being aware that Galilee had given birth to many seditious and rebellious characters, such as Judas, and those whose blood Pilate himself had mingled with their sacrifices (Luke xiii. 1), Theodas, &c. (Acts v. 36, 37.) The mention of Galilee suggested to Pilate a means of extricating himself from his embarrassment. He asked if He were a Galilean; and on being answered in the affirmative, he sends Him to Herod, to whose jurisdiction He belonged; and who, on the occasion of the solemn festival, came to Jerusalem.

St. Luke minutely details all that occurred in connexion with our Redeemer's being sent to Herod, the contumelious treatment He was subjected to in Herod's presence, and the ignominious manner in which He was again sent back to Pilate (xxiii. 7-13). When Pilate saw that He was sent back by Herod; he, in order to set our Redeemer free, said to the Chief Priests, whom he called together, "*You have brought this man to me as one that perverteth the people*"—this was the principal charge for Pilate and Herod to take cognizance of—"and behold . . . *I find no cause in this man . . . No, nor yet Herod,*" &c. (Luke xxiii. 14.) Then, this weak, temporizing judge bethought himself of a means of satisfying the fury of the Jews, without involving himself in the crime of condemning an innocent man. He orders Him to be scourged. "*I will chastise*"—that is, scourge Him—"therefore,

and release Him," hoping that their fury would relent on beholding the pitiable condition to which the cruel flagellation would have reduced Him. Hence, after it, he brought Him forth, and exclaimed, "*Behold the Man*" (John xix. 5). This expedient failing, he adopted another means of securing His release. It is recorded as follows, by St. Matthew :—

15, 16. "*Now upon the solemn day*" (St. John xviii. 39, expressly mentions the Pasch, as if by excellence, "*the solemn day*") "*the Governor was accustomed to release,*" &c. This custom was, most likely, introduced originally among the Jews, in commemoration of their liberation from the Egyptian bondage. And the Romans on obtaining the sovereignty of Judea, continued it, as they did several other usages, as a privilege granted to the people, the Governor himself being the party to carry it into effect, at the instance of the people, on the anniversary recurrence of each Paschal solemnity. Pilate now hoped that, by proposing to them a notorious prisoner, named *Barabbas*, "*a murderer*" (Luke xxiii. 19); "*a robber*" (John xix. 4, &c.), and leaving them to choose between him and Jesus, they could not for an instant, hesitate in their choice of Him, who had done so many acts of mercy in their favour, before a notorious murderer and robber. What humiliation to the Son of God, the author of life, to be put in competition with a notorious robber and murderer, and made equally the object of the people's choice.

17. It would seem from St. Mark (xv. 8), that it was the people who first called on Pilate to grant them the usual privilege of having a criminal pardoned at their request, and that Pilate seized on this opportunity thus presented to him, for extricating himself from his embarrassment. He then proposed to them, to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, not doubting but they would call for the release of Jesus. The usage would seem to be, that the Governor would propose a certain number of criminals, from among whom the people might make a choice; but, that the people had not the privilege of choosing indiscriminately any criminal, whom they pleased, for release. For, if this were the case, the people might have said: We do not choose either Jesus or Barabbas; but somebody else, perhaps, some less obnoxious member of the gang of seditious robbers, of whom Barabbas was the notorious leader.

18. Pilate well knew, that they were actuated in the whole case by feelings of jealousy and envy. Although many interpreters question Pilate's sincerity in his expressed desire to release our Lord; still, it seems more probable, he sincerely desired to set Him free. St. Luke expressly says so (xxiii. 20), and so does St. Peter (Acts iii. 13).

19. While waiting for the answer of the people, regarding the choice of a criminal to be released to them, a fresh testimony of our Redeemer's innocence was furnished to Pilate. His wife had been troubled with some startling dreams relative to our Lord. She calls Him a "*just man*," as did Pilate himself (v. 24), an epithet long before applied to Him by Isaias (liii.), "*justificabit ipse justus servus meus multos.*" What the nature or subject of her dream was, cannot be known. All the Evangelist records of it is, that it had the effect of causing her much suffering. Most likely, it revealed to her the grievous evils in store for her husband, in case he condemned "*this just man*," the innocent Jesus. Some say, this dream was caused by the devil, who now recognising Christ for the Son of God, saw the consequences

of His death. But this is not likely. Most probably, the devil already knew Him to be the Son of God. But, we have the testimony of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 8), that the devils, "*the princes of this world*," did not know the economy involved in the death of Christ, otherwise, they would not have crucified Him. And if they wished to prevent His death, they would have acted rather on the Jews, whom they instigated to murder the Son of God. Hence, most likely, the dream came from God, in order that every sex would bear testimony to Christ, as well as the very elements that eloquently testified to His Divinity at His death. And the dream was sent to his wife rather than to Pilate himself, in order that her message would be publicly delivered, in the presence of His enemies. Besides, Pilate's testimony might be liable to suspicion. For, many would say: he merely wished for some pretext for extricating himself out of the embarrassment, in which the condemnation of Christ, whom he knew to be innocent, would involve him.

20. The same is recorded by St. Mark (xv. 11). Pilate gave them time to deliberate about the answer, as to which of the two they would have released to them; and, in the meantime, the Chief Priests brought every influence to bear on them, to ask for Barabbas.

21. After due time for deliberation, he now again proposes the question, "*Which of the two would they have released to them?*" Their answer, calling for Barabbas, naturally disappointed and embarrassed Pilate. Hence, he cries out:

22. "*What shall I do with Jesus, that is called Christ?*" Their answer discloses their obstinate cruelty: "*Let Him be crucified.*" In St. Luke, the words are twice repeated, "*Crucify Him, crucify Him*" (xxiii. 21), which revealed their determination to put Him to a cruel death.

23. Pilate then said to them, "*Why*," crucify Him? "*What evil hath He done?*" St. Luke (xxiii. 22), informs us that, *for the third time*, Pilate said, he "*found no cause in Him*," that is, he could discover no crime committed by Him to warrant His death. Thus, Pilate, three times, bore testimony to His innocence. Pilate could, doubtless, find no cause in Him. But, not so with His Heavenly Father, who saw in Him the bail, the surety for sin, of which He took upon Himself the full imputability. For, "*the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. liii. 6). Their only answer was, "*Let Him be crucified.*"

24, 25, 26. Here Pilate devises another and most cruel expedient for satisfying the fury of the people, without involving himself in the crime of condemning Him. He orders Him to be scourged, hoping, that the fury of the people would relent on beholding the pitiable condition to which the cruel flagellation would reduce Him. Hence, he afterwards presented Him to the multitude, "*Behold the Man*" (John xix. 5). The washing of his hands by Pilate, &c. (vv. 24, 25), occurred *after* our Lord was scourged (Luke xxiii. 22), and is given here by anticipation. The circumstances and order of this flagellation are recorded more fully by SS. Luke and John. St. Luke mentions (xxiii. 18-22), that Pilate, after our Lord's return from Herod, calling together the Chief Priests, &c., said, "*I shall chastise Him*," that is, scourge Him, "*and release Him.*" He does not, however, tell us afterwards, what this chastisement was, *how* or *when* it took place. He ends his narrative of Pilate's conversation with the Jews, by simply informing us, that overcome by their

clamorous importunity, after releasing Barabbas, "*he delivered Jesus up to their will*" (v. 25). But, St. John, who wrote after St. Luke, distinctly informs us (xix. 1, &c.), that this chastisement was scourging; and that its object was to cause the people to relent at the sight of the man presented to them in such a pitiable state after his flagellation. St. Matthew and St. Mark, however, refer to the scourging of our Lord in such a way, as if it would seem to have taken place, not so much for the purpose of appeasing the multitude, as preparatory for crucifixion. For, as we are informed by St. Jerome, the custom with the Romans was to scourge first, those who were doomed to the ignominious death of the cross. And as St. John insinuates, that the scourging had for object to appease the multitude; hence, some expositors hold, that our Redeemer was scourged twice, and mocked twice by the soldiers; once, before the sentence of death was pronounced upon Him, in order to appease the fury of the Jews;—to this, St. John refers (xix. 1, &c.)—and a second time after the sentence, in compliance with the law or custom of the Romans, in such cases. This latter scourging, they say, is referred to by Matthew and Mark. The more probable and more common opinion, however, is, that He was scourged, &c., but once; and that, before the sentence was pronounced, as in St. John. To the same scourging, St. Matthew refers, when he says (xxvii. 26), "*having scourged Jesus*," already. This one flagellation answered the requirement of the Roman law quoted from St. Jerome, and the Greek word for, "*having scourged*" (*φραγελλώσας*), which refers to a past action, will fully bear out the meaning. Hence, in referring after the sentence of death was pronounced by Pilate, to the scourging and the insulting treatment of our Redeemer in Pilate's hall by the soldiers, both St. Matthew and St. Mark repeat, out of the proper order of narration, what took place before the sentence of death was pronounced, as we are informed by St. John. (xix. 1, &c.)

How painful this cruel flagellation was, may be inferred from the character of the executioners—heartless Pagan soldiers, dead to every feeling of pity—and from the object Pilate had in view, viz., by the shocking appearance He would present, to satisfy the rage of His enemies. According to the Jewish law, no criminal could receive forty stripes; but, as our shameful and sinful excesses, which He was expiating, outraged every law of reason and religion, so, these barbarous executioners are regulated by no law in His regard. They discharged on Him a shower of blows. It is said, that it was revealed to St. Bridget, that the number of stripes He received was above 5000. Hence, the excessive cruelty of His executioners, and the number of stripes they inflicted, coupled with the exquisite sensibility of His sacred body (for by its perfect organization it was framed for punishment), place the tortures of our Blessed Lord beyond the power of conception. He was scourged at a pillar, which, or, at least a portion of it according to some, is to be seen in a little chapel of the Church of Saint Praxedes, at Rome. This pillar was formerly kept at Jerusalem in Mount Sion, as we are informed by St. Gregory Naz. (Orat. 1, in Julian); St. Paulinus (Epis. 34); Ven. Bede (de locis Sanctis), St. Jerome, &c. It was brought to Rome in the year 1223, by John Cardinal Columna, Apostolic Legate in the East, under Pope Honorius III., as we are informed by the inscription over the little chapel in the Church of St. Praxedes.

The scourges are said to be made of leather thongs or cords. Others say, He was scourged, after the Roman manner, with rods. The Roman *fascies* were composed of rods, with an axe, for the scourging and execution of criminals.

"*Delivered Him to them to be crucified.*" Pilate did this by a judicial sentence, condemning Him to the death of the cross. But this occurred only after He was mocked by the soldiers, crowned with thorns, &c., as is very accurately and minutely

described by St. John. (xix.) Hence, in St. Matthew's description, the order of events is not observed.

27. "*Then*," does not mean, that the following occurrences took place immediately after He was delivered by Pilate to be crucified, as in preceding verse. It only means, that they happened at the time of, or, during His Passion. We are informed by St. John (xix. 2, &c.), that this mocking of our Redeemer, &c., took place immediately in connexion with the cruel scourging. Hence, "*then*," refers not to "*delivered Him to be crucified*," but to the words, "*having scourged Jesus*."

"*The soldiers of the Governor*," his body-guard. Most likely, they constituted the Prætorian cohort, who were always at the service of the Prætor or Governor in his province. This band was stationed in the Citadel Antonia, midway between the palace of Pilate and the temple.

"*Taking Jesus into the hall*," or, as St. Mark more clearly expresses it (xv. 16), "*into the court of the palace*," where the Governor resided. It would seem, that this was done by four soldiers, who acted the part of Lictors (John xix. 23). In this hall, very probably, was the Prætor's tribunal, and they made our Redeemer ascend this, in derision of His Royal dignity.

"*Gathered together unto Him the entire band*." "*The band*," or cohort, being the tenth part of a Roman legion, would vary in number according to the number in the legion, which was sometimes more, sometimes less. The ordinary number constituting a legion, was 6000. Hence, "*the band*," or cohort, probably contained 600. These were gathered together for the purpose of mocking and insolently deriding our Divine Redeemer.

28. "*And stripping Him*" of His clothes, which had been put on Him after He was scourged, or stripping Him for the purpose of scourging Him. Then, after this cruel deed, when He was yet naked, "*they put a scarlet cloak about Him*," in derision of His Royal dignity, such being worn by kings and emperors. It is doubtful, whether our Lord, after being scourged, had been clothed again with His own garments, and then again *stripped* of them, when the soldiers mocked Him; or, whether the words, "*stripping Him*," do not refer to the act preparatory to His flagellation. St. Mark (xv. 20), calls it "*purple*." But as "*purple*" is sometimes taken to denote a *bright red*, hence the words, *purple* and *scarlet*, are interchanged; and the two Evangelists, as well as many other writers, make no distinction between both words.

29. "*And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head*," in derision of His kingly dignity. "*And a reed in His right hand*," to serve as a sceptre for this mock King of the Jews. There is some diversity of opinion regarding the *nature* and *materials* of this crown. The thorns from it, which are exhibited in the Holy Chapel, built by St. Louis, for the reception of this pious relic of the *Crown of Thorns* at Paris, are very large and sharp. The pain caused our Divine Redeemer, by the pressure of these sharp thorns into His sacred head and temples, must have been excessive. From it we can learn the excessive enormity of our wicked thoughts of consent, which it was intended to expiate.

"*And bowing down . . . Hail, King of the Jews*." This also was done in derision of His Royal dignity.

30. "*And spitting on Him, they took the reed and struck His head*," thereby pressing the crown of thorns more deeply and more firmly on Him, which was to our Blessed

Lord, a source of the deepest humiliation and torture. We see from the foregoing, how our Lord was derisively clothed with all the ensigns of Royalty, and insultingly treated by the soldiers as the mock King of the Jews—1st They gather around Him the entire cohort to wait on Him. They place Him on some lofty stone or bench, as on a sort of tribunal, as St. Clement, of Alexandria, informs us. They give Him for a Royal crown, that of thorns. For a Royal vestment, they throw a scarlet cloak around Him (probably, this was a cast-off cloak of some Roman officer). They gave Him a reed for a Royal sceptre, and the acclamations with which He was greeted were the derisive genuflexions of the soldiers, spittle, blows, and stripes, all of which our amiable Saviour bore with astonishing humility and meekness, and they merited for Him, that “*every knee, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell, should bend,*” at a future day, before Him.

Here, in the order of narrative, should be inserted, what is recorded by St. John (xix. 4-16). Pilate had either instructed or permitted the soldiers to treat our Lord in the contumelious manner just now described by St. Matthew; and also to torture Him with the crown of thorns, in order that the pitiable appearance He would present, might cause the Jews to relent. Going forth, he said to the Jews (John xix. 4), “*I bring Him forth to you, that you may know, that I find no cause in Him.*” And immediately after, Jesus came forth from the Governor’s hall, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment; and then, Pilate pointing to His miserable condition, with a view to exciting their commiseration, said, “*Behold the Man;*” see the wretched being, whom you have charged with aspiring to Royal dignity, and with meditating the overthrow of Cæsar’s power. Think you now is there anything to be dreaded from Him on this score? Instead of relenting, the people, instigated by the Chief Priests, cried out, “*Crucify Him,*” &c. Pilate, being irritated at this, replied, “*Take Him you and crucify Him, for I find no cause in Him.*” They replied: Although, He may not have transgressed against the majesty or laws of Rome, He has violated a law of ours, which entails death, by making Himself the Son of God; and, as Governor, you should punish the violation of our laws. Pilate was seized with religious awe on hearing this. Yielding to the absurd notions conveyed in the Pagan Fables, respecting the progeny of the gods, he feared that Jesus might be son of Jupiter, or of Hercules, &c., and that he would incur the anger of the gods, if he punished Him. The character of the wonders performed by our Lord, the fame of which must have reached Pilate, together with the magnanimity displayed by Him, were calculated to strengthen the belief in the mind of Pilate. Hence, entering the hall again, he asked our Lord, without receiving a reply, “*Whence art Thou?*” (John xix. 10), as if he said, of what father or mother or stock art Thou descended? from heaven or earth? Our Redeemer saw, that the Pagan mind of Pilate was incapable of comprehending the truth of the answer respecting the eternal generation of the Son of God; He, moreover, knew that Pilate was ready to deliver Him up to the Jews; He was, therefore, silent, it being useless to give any reply. Pilate, thinking his authority was slighted, boasts at once of his authority, telling Him he had power to crucify Him, and power to release Him. Our Redeemer, hitherto silent, could not permit this arrogance of Pilate, which detracted from the glory of His Passion, that depended altogether on the dispositions of His Heavenly Father, to pass unreviewed.

Pilate boasted of having authority over our Redeemer, who shows him that any authority he may have had, must come from a higher power, and “*begiven him from above,*” and that it depended altogether on the adorable dispositions of that higher power, whether He was to be released or crucified, whether He would voluntarily undergo or escape death. But, that it did not depend on Pilate. Similar is the reproach

conveyed to the Jews in the Garden of Gethsemani, "*you are come out, as against a robber*" (xxvi. 55); "*but this is your hour, and the power of darkness*" (Luke xxii. 53). Our Redeemer adds (John xix. 11), "*Therefore, he that delivered Me to thee, hath the greater sin,*" as if He said, because thou hast permissive power from God against Me, and art about to exercise it, however unjustly, and art about to condemn Me unjustly to death in virtue of that permissive power; hence, those who, from malignity and envy, have delivered Me to thee have sinned more than thou hast. For, although thou dost act unjustly, and out of regard for human respect, and thus dost sin grievously against justice and the duty of thy office; still, thou doest so, in a certain sense, unwillingly; and hence, those, who from envy and malice, have thus forced thee to this course of injustice, have committed a greater sin. Pilate, whose conscience was thus indirectly taxed with injustice, and whom the reply of our Redeemer left in still greater doubt, as to His Divine origin, sought with greater earnestness to release Him. He had done so already four different times (Luke xxiii. 4-15, 20-22; John xix. 4-12). He did it now with greater earnestness, for the reason already assigned, "*from thenceforward.*" But the Jews seeing that their charge of blasphemy had no effect on Pilate, revert to their original charge of seditious conduct; and knowing Pilate's weakness, and the terror with which the jealous disposition of Tiberius had inspired all his Governors, when there was even an approach to the crime, *læsæ majestatis*, they, at once, threaten to accuse him to his imperial master of the charge of disaffection, and of protecting his enemies. This moved Pilate very much (John xix. 13-16). Here, then, in the order of narrative, is inserted, what is recorded and supplemented by St. John (xix. 4-16), viz., how our Redeemer was shown to the Jews in a pitiable state by Pilate, with the view of exciting their compassion, and inducing them to relent; how the Jews being nowise appeased by this sad spectacle which Jesus presented, our Redeemer was again questioned by Pilate, on the charge of claiming to be the Son of God; and after various efforts on the part of Pilate to release Him, how the Jews clamorously calling for His death, and charging Pilate himself with disaffection to Caesar, Pilate at length yielded to their desires, and mounting his tribunal, gave Jesus over to them to be crucified. After this, the soldiers taking off the purple cloak from Him, led Him forth to be crucified, as in following verse.

31. After the soldiers had mocked our Blessed Lord, and subjected Him to treatment the most ignominious and humiliating, "*they took off the (purple) cloak from Him,*" this cast-off worn garment which was quite worthless. (Here, St. Matthew reverts to the subject treated of, verse 26, "*he delivered Him,*" &c., after inserting some circumstances which occurred in connexion with the cruel flagellation.) "*And put on His own garments.*" This was done, very probably, to make Him more remarkable, and thus humble Him the more in presence of the crowded city. They might also have in view, to establish a claim to His clothes (of greater value than the worthless scarlet cloak), which, according to the usages of the time, belonged to His crucifiers. We find that they afterwards divided His garments among them. There is no mention made of their having taken the crown of thorns off Him. Most likely, this was left on Him to add to His ignominy. Moreover, it was, probably, so deeply inserted into His head, that it could not conveniently be removed.

"*And led Him away (from the Prætorium) to crucify Him.*" Most likely, a crier or trumpeter preceded them, summoning the people to witness the sad, ignominious spectacle, in accordance with the usage prevailing among the Romans on such occasions. It is not easy to conceive the insults and injurious treatment inflicted on our innocent Saviour on this His last journey to Calvary. Very probably, He was

goaded on by the soldiers, a subject of diversion to the people, who from their houses and in the midst of their repast, beheld Him, advancing under the heavy weight of His cross. He thus verified the words of the Prophet, "*in me psallebant, qui bibebant vinum*" (Psa. lxxviii. 13).

We can form some idea of the fatigue our Redeemer must have endured in this last journey while bearing His cross, if we consider the several journeys He was obliged to undergo during the day and the preceding night. From the Supper Hall, He went on the preceding night to Mount Olivet and the Garden of Gethsemani, more than a mile from Jerusalem; thence, He was brought back to the house of Annas, an equal distance; thence, to the house of Caiphas; thence, to the house of Pilate; thence, to the palace of Herod; and thence again to the Hall of Pilate; and, finally, He was obliged to set out on this His last journey, "*bearing His own cross*" (John xix. 17). It was customary for those condemned to the death of the cross to carry their cross to the place of execution. This cross, which was considerably longer than the body of the culprit to be nailed to it, our Redeemer was obliged partly to carry, and partly to drag after Him; which, owing to the roughness of the road, and the bruised and wounded state of His body, must have caused Him excessive pain.

TEXT.

32. *And going out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon: him they forced to take up his cross.*

33. *And they came to the place that is called Golgotha, which is, the place of Calvary.*

34. *And they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when he had tasted he could not drink.*

35. *And after they had crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "They divided my garments among them; and upon my vesture they cast lots."*

36. *And they sat and watched him.*

37. *And they put over his head his cause written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS*

38. *Then were crucified with him two thieves: one on the right hand, and one on the left.*

39. *And they that passed by, blasphemed him wagging their heads,*

40. *And saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it; save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

41. *In like manner also the chief priests with the Scribes and ancients mocking, said:*

42. *He saved others; himself he cannot save: if he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*

43. *He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him: for he said: I am the Son of God.*

44. *And the self same King the thieves also, that were crucified with him, reproached him with.*

45. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour*

46. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

47. *And some that stood there and heard, said: This man calleth Elias.*

48. *And immediately one of them running, took a sponge and filled it with vinegar; and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.*

49. *And the others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver him.*

50. *And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

COMMENTARY.

32. "*And going out*" of the gate of the city, on the road leading to the place of execution, seeing our Redeemer exhausted, and fearing He might not survive, so as to be made die the ignominious death of the cross, meeting "*a man of Cyrene, named Simon, they forced him to take up His* (our Redeemer's) *cross.*" This Simon, supposed by some to have been a Jew, or at least a Jewish proselyte, was father of Alexander and Rufus, well-known disciples of our Lord. It may be that St. Mark (xv. 21) mentions this circumstance, because it was a great honour to them that their father had carried our Lord's cross. Others say, he was a Gentile, and from this circumstance, they would have us infer, that the true, obedient disciples, who were to carry His cross after Him, were to be chiefly found among the Gentiles. It is disputed, which "*Cyrene*" is here referred to, whether that of Lybia, in Africa, where a Jewish colony had settled in the time of Ptolomeus Lagus, or that of Syria or Cyprus, founded by Cyrus, whence the name Cyrene.

"*They forced Him.*" In the original, it means, *impressed*. The original term (*αγγαρος*), is derived from the Persian, and signifies, a courier, sent to carry public intelligence. The king's couriers had a right to *press* horses and vehicles, either for the post, or the public service generally, and, when necessary, could compel the personal attendance of the owners. Hence, the word is generally employed to denote *impressment*, or *forcing* one to do a thing against his will (see c. v. 41). Some modern writers assert, that this *Simon* was a Jew, from Cyrene, in Lybia; and, being a well-known disciple of our Redeemer, was forced by the soldiers, at the instigation of the Jews, to carry our Redeemer's cross. Some say, he helped our Redeemer to carry the cross, both carrying it at the same time. But, the most common and best founded opinion is, that after our Redeemer had been unable to carry His cross, it was laid on Simon, who carried it alone to the place of execution. Luke (xxiii. 26), says, "*they laid the cross on him, to carry after Jesus.*" Here, it is said, "*they forced him to take up His cross.*" Our Redeemer Himself, as was the custom with men condemned to be crucified, had carried the cross, that is, the transverse part of it, the oblong portion trailing after Him on the ground. This caused Him great pain, considering the ulcerations caused by the cruel scourging. It was only when He was fainting, they placed it on Simon, after they passed the gate of the city that led to Calvary.

Here should be inserted what is described by St. Luke (xxiii. 27-32), regarding the "*multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him.*" Far from sharing in the feelings of His enemies, they rather shed tears of sympathy in His sorrows. Turning to them, He told them to weep not so much for His sufferings—although, this He did not prevent—as for the dreadful evils which were soon to come upon them, when they would bless "*the barren,*" &c., as happened at the taking of Jerusalem, soon after, when, not only were their children slain, and those under seventeen sold, as bond slaves, but even unhappy mothers, in some instances, from extreme pressure of famine, devoured their own children (Josephus, de Bel. Jud. Lib. vii. c. 8). "*And they shall call upon the mountains,*" &c., a proverbial form of expression, denoting utter despair, in presence of unavoidable calamities (Osee x. 8). Many of the Jews, at the taking of Jerusalem, hid themselves in the vaults and sepulchres, sooner than surrender to the Romans (Josephus). Very probably, among those pious followers, were the Galilean women, who ministered to His wants, Martha and Mary also included, whom the dread of His enemies did not prevent from giving full expression to their affection for our Lord, on this, his last road to Calvary.

St. Luke adds here (xxiii. 32), "*And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death.*"

33. "*And they came to the place which is called Golgotha.*" The Chaldaic, or Syriac form, is, *Gol-Goltha*, second *l* being omitted for euphony's sake, as *Babel* is used for *Bul-bel*. "*Which is the place of Calvary,*" or, the place of skulls. Calvary was a sort of knoll, called so, most likely, in consequence of the skulls of persons executed or buried there being scattered about, according to the opinion of St. Jerome, Bede, &c. Some ancient writers, Origen, Theophylact, &c., say, it was called so, from the skull of Adam, which, they conjecture, was buried there. But if this were the case, it is not likely, the Jews would have made it the place for the execution of malefactors, &c. The Evangelist, in interpreting *Golgotha*, which means, *skulls*, used the words, "*place of Calvary,*" to show that the word, *Golgotha*, that is, *skulls*, had reference to place. St. Paul (Heb. xiii. 11), assigns the fourfold reasons—*literal, allegorical, anagogical, tropological*—why our Lord was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem (see Commentary on). St. Jerome, St. Augustine, &c., say, it was on the same mountain Abraham was about to offer up Isaac—a distinguished type of Christ—for, Mount Moria is in the vicinity of Calvary

34. "*And they gave Him wine,*" &c. In some Greek copies, for wine we read *ὄξος*, *vinegar*. However, St. Jerome and St. Hilary read, *wine*, as in our Vulgate. St. Mark (xv. 23), has, "*wine mixed with myrrh.*" The most probable mode of reconciling this discrepancy is, that the Greek word, *ὄξος*, *vinegar*, sometimes denotes a poor sort of wine, and the Greek word for "*gall,*" *χολή*, sometimes means, a bitter drug. It is used by the LXX. to signify, absinthium, so that it denotes the same thing with the *myrrh*, referred to by St. Mark. It may be, that both ingredients, "*myrrh*" and "*gall,*" were added, to render it more bitter. It was customary, before crucifixion, to give persons, about to be executed, a potion, out of pity and humanity, in order to give them some consolation and refreshment, and also to strengthen them to bear their torments with greater fortitude. But, such was the malice of the Jews, that this potion was converted into a nauseous, bitter draught, not to be endured. The drink here given is different from that referred to (v. 48), and by St. Luke (xxiii. 36), St. John (xix. 29). In the former are verified the words of the Psalmist, "*dederunt in escam meam fel;*" in the latter, "*et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto.*" The former was given before His crucifixion, and it was *wine*; the latter, in the crucifixion, and it was *vinegar*.

"*And when He had tasted, He would not drink.*" He "*tasted*" it, lest He might seem, from indignation, to despise it. "*He would not drink,*" that is, swallow it, being determined to submit to the painful death of the cross, without any mitigation or alleviation of His sufferings. He refused to partake of the draught usually presented to criminals on the point of crucifixion, out of feelings of humanity, to mitigate their sufferings. Others, who do not admit that the Jews would present this drink to our Lord, from such a benevolent motive, say, His object in refusing was, to show His horror of the inhuman malice of His enemies.

35. "*After they had crucified Him.*" It is observed by some commentators (A. Lapide, &c.), that St. Matthew, in referring to the crucifixion of his Divine Master, not only indulges in his usual brevity in narrative; but, that he also, from a feeling of horror, at the indignity and atrocity of this punishment being inflicted on the Son of God, represents it, not so much as present—it being a thing too much to

bear—but as past, “*after they had crucified Him.*” It is a point of faith, that it was with nails, which pierced His hands and feet, our Redeemer was fastened to the cross (John xx. 25, &c.; Psa. xxi.), “*foderunt manus meas,*” &c. It may be that cords were also used to fasten His body to the cross. Some say, that a sort of prop was fastened to the cross, on which His feet could rest. But, this is unlikely, as our Redeemer did not stand, but was suspended from the cross (Acts v. 30; Gal. iii. 13). The number of nails employed is also disputed. Some say, there were *four*. Others, only three; one through each hand; and one through both His feet, placed one over the other. One of these nails may be at present seen at the Church S. Crucis, at Rome. I myself, had the happiness of reverently touching it with my beads and pectoral cross. Very likely, the two thieves were also hung on the cross with nails; as, otherwise, St. Helena could have no difficulty in recognising our Redeemer’s cross, from the track of the nails; whereas, it was only by a miracle it could be ascertained which was the true cross. It is most likely, that these rough nails were driven through the palms of the hands, where the sense of touch is most acute. This opinion derives great probability from the words of the Prophet Zacharias, “*quid sunt plagæ istæ in medio manuum tuarum?*” (xiii. 6). Others say, the nails were driven through His wrists, where the touch is most acutely sensitive, and, obliquely passing through the wood, came out at the surface of His hand, thus rendering the wound larger, and the pain more intense.

The INTENSITY of our Redeemer’s tortures may be estimated from the nature of the wounds inflicted—the boring of His hands, &c.—from the weight of His body hanging from His *perforated* hands and feet—from their continuance for three hours—from the dislocation of His limbs, “*foderunt . . . dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea.*” (Psa. xxi.)

Tertullian (Lib. contra Judeos, c. 13), asserts, that He wore the crown of thorns on the cross. This is rejected by others, who say, that after having mocked Him, the soldiers took away the mock ensigns of royalty, and led Him forth to Calvary in His own clothes.

It would occupy, and perhaps, needlessly, too much space to enumerate the causes, *literal* and *moral*, which made our Redeemer submit to the ignominious death of the cross, in preference to any other, both on the part of the Jews, and of His eternal Father. The Jews had chosen it for the ignominy it entailed, and thus to abolish the name of Christ for ever. The Heavenly Father had chosen it, as most suitable to confound the folly of human pride; as the most suitable means of reparation, viz., by means of wood, our ruin having been brought about by means of the wood of the tree in Paradise; as most suitable, to show forth the excessive charity of God for us, in submitting to so ignominious and painful a death, and the severity of His justice, which demanded such reparation for sin, &c. Some commentators say that our Redeemer was crucified with His *face* towards the *west*, with His back to Jerusalem, to show the election of the Gentiles and reprobation of the Jews. Thus were also verified the words of Jeremias (xviii. 17), “*I shall show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their destruction.*” “*Oculi ejus super Gentes respiciunt*” (Psa. lxxv. 7).

The day of our Redeemer’s crucifixion was the 25th of March; the *hour*, about mid-day. St. John says, it was “*the sixth hour*” (xix. 14), from sunrise, which was mid-day. “*It was the third hour,*” according to St. Mark (xv. 25). But, he means “*the third hour,*” now closing, which was the commencement of the *sixth* hour. For, each hour in the computation of their four watches contained three hours among the Jews and Romans. Tertullian (Lib. contra Marcion), and others, say, that our Lord was

crucified on the same day, in the vernal equinox, on which Adam was created, and was crucified at the same hour, at which he ate the forbidden fruit.

"*They divided His garments,*" &c. The four Evangelists describe the division of the garments, the inscription of the title, and the crucifixion of the two robbers, not in the same order. St. Mark (xv. 24, &c.), follows the same order of narrative with St. Matthew. St. Luke (xxiii. 33, &c.), describes the crucifixion of the robbers first; then, the division of the garments, and finally, the inscription of the title. St. John, whose order of narrative is deemed the most accurate, as he wrote after the others (xix. 18, &c.), places the crucifixion of the robbers first, the title next, and the division of the garments in the last place.

The words of our Redeemer on the cross, described by St. Luke (xxiii. 34), "*Father, forgive them,*" &c., should be inserted before these words, in the order of narrative. Then, "*they divided His garments, casting lots.*" This is more circumstantially and more distinctly narrated by St. John. (xix. 23, &c.) He informs us, that the soldiers divided His garments into four parts, so that the soldiers, who were four in number, received a part, each. From the words of the soldiers, in reference to the seamless (inner) garment, "*Let us not cut it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,*" it is clearly inferred, that they cut up into four parts our Lord's *outer* garment, according to the form after which the Jewish outer garments should be made (Deut. xxii. 12). These outer garments had four seams, and four corners, to which strings or fringes should be attached. Some imagine that our Lord wore *four outside* garments, besides the seamless coat, which was an inside garment, and that the soldiers took one each. But this is improbable. They divided the one outer garment into four parts. In the account of St. John, the words of Scripture are clearly fulfilled, "*They divided My garments,*" which is *implied* in the words, "*Let us not cut it,*" as had been done to the other. "*And upon My vesture they cast lots,*" which is clearly *expressed* in the words, "*Let us cast lots for it.*" From St. Mark, however (xv. 24), it would seem, that they cast lots for the four parts into which the vestment was divided. "*The coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.*" The weaving of it began at the top, or upper part, and it was woven without any seam to the bottom. This "*coat,*" most probably, worn next His person, Euthymius tells us, was, according to the opinion of the ancients, woven by the hands of His Immaculate Mother. It is now preserved at Treves, and an object of religious worship to the faithful. The same author, after rejecting, as improbable, the opinion of those who assert that our Redeemer had *five* garments, one for each of the four soldiers, besides the seamless coat, regards it as a probable conjecture, that our Lord had *three* garments; that, besides the seamless coat, He had a flowing robe, and outside that, one corresponding to a cloak, covering all. For, St. John speaks of our Lord's garments in the plural: "*They took His garments*" (xix. 23). Nor is this opposed to the mandate He gave His Apostles on the eve of going on their mission. For, there He speaks of two coats *of the same kind*.

The division of our Lord's garments into four parts, denoted the extension of the Church to the four corners of the world; while the seamless coat denoted the indivisible unity which heretics alone attempt to rend and cut asunder. As the division of the garments of the two robbers did not contain any mystery, and did not directly belong to the history of our Redeemer's Passion, the Evangelist says nothing of it, although, it is very probable a like division and distribution took place in their case also, in accordance with the prevailing usage of the time, regarding the destination of the garments of criminals subjected to execution.

What a source of humiliation to our Redeemer to hang naked on a cross,

subjected to the derisive gaze of a scoffing multitude, "*operuit confusio faciem meam.*" (Psa. lviii.) It must have added to His painful humiliation to see His garments thus divided, as if He were given over to death, and no hopes entertained regarding Him. Probably, in this division of His garments, the soldiers added insulting, jeering taunts, injuriously, and wantonly mocking Him, as if they were dividing among themselves the precious robes of Royalty. This however, added to our Redeemer's glory, as thus the Scripture of the prophet was fulfilled (Psa. xxi. 19).

"*That the word might be fulfilled,*" &c. These words are wanting in many of the ancient Fathers and versions, including many Greek and Latin codices. Hence, many learned critics supposed they were inserted here from St. John (xix. 24) by transcribers. However, the authority of the Vulgate outweighs all these, the more so, in this instance, if it be borne in mind, that of all the Evangelists, St. Matthew is most careful and desirous to show everywhere, that the ancient prophecies were accomplished in our Divine Redeemer.

36. "*Watched Him.*" The Greek adds, ἐκεῖ, *there*, on Mount Calvary. The soldiers who acted as Lictors, and the Jews also kept watch, lest any of His disciples should come and take Him down, or He Himself might miraculously descend from the cross. But, contrary to their designs, this only tended to the glory of Christ, in removing any grounds for doubting the truth of His resurrection. Had they themselves not watched Him, they might have charged His disciples with having taken Him down alive from the cross. It also shows their fears, arising from remorse of conscience.

37. "*And they,*" that is, the soldiers, His executioners, by the command of Pilate (John xix. 19), "*put over His head,*" that is, on the portion of the cross, which was above His head, "*His cause written.*" that is, the alleged crime for which He was condemned to death. Mark (xv. 26) calls it, "*the inscription of His cause;*" Luke (xxiii. 38), "*a superscription;*" John (xix. 19), "*a title.*" They all mean the same thing, viz., the words written, or, rather, legibly cut on a board or tablet placed over His head, and indicating to all the charge on which He was condemned to death. It is not likely, that the words were inscribed on the arm of the cross, placed above His head, as it would hardly contain space enough to have the words inscribed in large, legible characters, in three languages. It is a very ancient Oriental custom to have these titles either attached to every malefactor condemned to death, or borne before him. This title of our Redeemer was written in three languages, which were consecrated on the cross of Christ; the Hebrew, the vernacular of the country; the Greek, then most extensively diffused; and the Latin, on account of the majesty of the Roman Empire. It is given differently by the four Evangelists, who agree, however, in substance. That given by St. John, "*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,*" is generally considered to be the most exact title, because St. John saw it at the crucifixion, and wrote after the other Evangelists; and also, this corresponds with the title, which, as a most precious relic, is preserved at Rome, in the Church of the Holy Cross. In this relic, the only word perfectly legible is "*Nazarenus.*" As the Hebrew form, like all Hebrew writings, was written from right to left; so, in the Greek and Latin inscriptions, the same order, contrary to the usual custom, was observed. The writing of the title in three languages, the language of the Jews, and the principal languages among the Gentiles, showed that Christ had suffered for all mankind, and broke down the middle wall of partition between the Jewish and Gentile peoples.

The title showed forth the name of the culprit—"Jesus;" His country, "*of Nazareth;*" His crime, "*King of the Jews.*" Although Pilate meant these words to signify (WHO AFFECTED TO BE) "*King of the Jews,*" still, by a Divine instinct guiding his hand, he was directed to write, in a still more exalted sense, the real cause of Christ's crucifixion, viz., that He was crucified because He was really the "*King of the Jews,*" the long expected Messiah, the eternal Son of God, whom it was meet, according to the ancient prophecies and the decrees of His Heavenly Father, that the Jews would put to death, in order to redeem the human race, and rescue it from the slavery of sin, by the effusion of His most precious blood.

And although the Jews eagerly desired that Pilate would change this "title" (John xix. 21)—it may be, they returned from Calvary to Pilate's house; or Pilate himself might have been at Mount Calvary—still, Pilate obstinately resisted all their solicitations, the providence of God so guiding him, and, very probably, Pilate had in view, now that his fears of being accused before Cæsar were removed by the crucifixion of Christ, to restore to Jesus the honour of which he unjustly deprived Him, by sanctioning the high titles with which He was greeted by His followers. Moreover, he may have wished to take vengeance on the Jews for forcing him to condemn an innocent man, by branding the whole nation with the indelible stigma and the infamy of having crucified their own King. But, whatever might have been Pilate's intention, God, who had suggested to Pilate the very words of the title, did not allow him to alter it for the reason already referred to, viz., to show that, as according to the prophecies, the King of the Jews was to suffer on a cross; therefore, the true cause on the part of God, why Jesus was crucified, was, that He was really King of the Jews.

38. "*Two thieves*"—highway robbers and brigands, with whom, owing to the shameful corruption of successive Roman Governors, Judea was then infested—"were crucified with Him." This was, probably, done by Pilate, as a cloak for his iniquity, lest he should seem to be so influenced by others, as to punish the innocent and spare the guilty. It was also done at the suggestion of the Jews, for the greater humiliation of our Lord, to render Him more infamous, as associated with such wicked characters, well known to be such by all the people. "*On the right,*" &c. He was suspended in the midst, as the most infamous of the three. But this only tended to the glory of Christ, by verifying the prophecies regarding Him. "*Et cum iniquis reputatus fuit*" (Isa. liii. 12; Mark xv. 28).

It also denoted, that all mankind were called to a participation in the fruits of His Passion, who came in the midst of guilty, sinful men, to sanctify all by His innocence; that He would, however, make a distinction between the faithful, represented by the penitent thief, who implored the Divine mercy, and the unbelievers, represented by the impenitent thief, who blasphemed Him, and that the day would come when He would place the former on His right hand, and the latter on His left.

39. "*They that passed by,*" including those who were accidentally passing, as also those who went out expressly, "*and stood beholding Him*" (Luke xxiii. 35), "*blasphemed Him,*" by their jeers and scornful scoffs, reproaching Him with His imputed crimes, so ignominiously punished, and by moving their heads in an insulting, scornful manner. This was predicted (Psa. cviii. 25). These jeers and reproachful scoffs, addressed to the Son of God—the Holy of Holies—were so many "*blasphemies.*" Such conduct showed the heartless cruelty and barbarous inhumanity of the Jews.

For, the greatest criminals, while enduring torments, claim our commiseration. Hence, they added considerably to the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer. "*Whom thou hast smitten, they have persecuted*" (Psa. lxxviii. 27).

40. "*And saying: Vah,*" &c. "*Vah,*" an interjection, denoting derision and scorn, similar to "*fie*" with us; as much as to say, Thou impious, shameless braggart. It is not found now in the Greek versions. The Greek of it in other places of SS. Scripture is, *vai*, corresponding with the Hebrew, *Heah*. It has reference to Psalm xxxiv. 21, the same as *Euge, Euge*, for which the Hebrew is *Heah*.

"*Thou, that destroyest,*" &c. The Greek means, Thou destroyer of the temple, &c., and builder of it . . . *save Thyself*, &c., that is, show now that Thou canst carry out Thy foolish boasting by saving Thyself from an ignominious death. "*If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*" Similar was the suggestion of the devil, "*si filius Dei es, mitte te deorsum*" (iv. 6), equally foolish and perverse. For, it is because He is Son of God, He should remain and die the death of the cross, to vanquish death itself, "*ero mors tua, o mors*;" and it is rather by His rising from the tomb, than by His descent from the cross, He should prove Himself to be the Son of God.

41. "*In like manner also, the Chief Priests,*" &c. Another class, who insulted our Lord on the cross.

42. "*He saved others,*" &c. The reproaches of the Chief Priests, &c., against our Lord, speaking to one another, were still more malignant than those of the people. They scoff at His miracles, whereby He saved others from death, and insinuate that they came not from God, but from Beelzebub. If His miracles were performed by the power of God, God would now save Him from an ignominious death; and hence, they insinuate, that He was an impostor and false prophet. They next reproach Him with the assumption of Royal dignity: "*If He be the King of Israel*"—in allusion to the "*title*" placed on His cross by Pilate—"let Him descend from the cross." In this they show themselves deserving of censure, inasmuch as they had no reason for thinking that His descending from the cross would prove Him to be "*the King of Israel*," and the promised Messiah. On the contrary, it was because He was the King of Israel and the promised Messiah, He would remain on the cross to redeem the world. They also state an untruth, that in the event of His descending from the cross, they would believe in Him, as is proved by their not believing in Him after a still greater miracle of His power displayed, in His resurrection. They would have rather ascribed His coming down from the cross to magic and diabolical agency, to which they often before attributed His other miracles.

43. They add a third subject of reproach, viz., His vain and presumptuous confidence in God. But this confidence in God on the part of a man in great straits, should be rather a subject of praise than of reproach; and these men falsely judge, that a release from suffering should result from confidence in God; whereas, the contrary frequently happens in the case of the greatest saints; God, for their greater good, thus testing their virtue. In these jeering scoffs of the High Priests, &c., are literally fulfilled the prophecy regarding Christ, in whose Person the Royal Psalmist speaks (Psa. xxi. 8). The Passion of our Lord is the subject of that Psalm. To the same, reference is made (Wisdom ii. 16, 17), where, in the person of the Jews, the Wise man says, "*He glorieth that He hath God for His Father. Let us see then if His words are*

true," &c.; (v. 21), "*These things they thought and were deceived, for their own malice blinded them.*"

"*Let Him deliver Him, if He will have Him,*" that is, if He loves Him. But the very reverse would be the result. It is because God loved Him, as His well-beloved Son, He subjected Him to the death of the cross.

44. St. Luke (xxiii. 36) mentions a third class, who mocked and scoffed at our Lord on the cross, viz., the soldiers, who acted as His executioners. He was finally mocked by the robbers who were crucified along with Him, as SS. Matthew and Mark testify. The Evangelists use the word, "*thieves,*" in the plural number, by a figure quite common in Scripture, by which the plural is employed for the singular. Thus it is said (Luke xxiii. 36), "*the soldiers offered Him vinegar,*" whereas only *one* soldier did so. Only *one* of the thieves reviled our Lord (Luke xxiii. 40). Whether the penitent thief, in the first instance, joined his associate in reviling our Lord, and became afterwards converted, is disputed; but the most common opinion among the Latin Fathers is, that he did not, from first to last, revile our Blessed Lord. St. Luke circumstantially relates what is only expressed here in general words by St. Matthew. He also describes the conversion of the penitent thief, and the promise of salvation made to him by our Redeemer. (xxiii. 39, &c.)

45. Before this, should be inserted in historical order the words addressed by our Blessed Lord to St. John and His own Blessed Virgin Mother (John xix. 25-27).

"*From the sixth hour there was darkness,*" &c. As the crucifixion of our Lord occurred at the vernal equinoxes, when the days and nights are equal, "*the sixth hour*" corresponded with our twelve o'clock, the sun having risen at six in the morning, and set at six in the evening. The darkness occurred at the time the sun occupies the highest place in the heavens, and his light is brightest, which sets forth in the clearest manner, the preternatural quality of the darkness referred to.

Eusebius, in his Chronicle, and other ecclesiastical writers, quote a passage from Phlegon, in his History of the Olympiads, in which he says that "in the fourth year of the 202 Olympiad, there occurred the greatest eclipse ever known. It was night at the sixth hour, that is, twelve o'clock at mid-day, and the stars were visible." He also speaks of an earthquake, at the same time, at Bithynia. These authors entertain no doubt whatever of the identity of this eclipse and the earthquake with those which occurred at the death of Christ. Their *date* is the same. The fourth year of the 202 Olympiad commenced in the summer of the 32nd year of our era, and closed at the summer solstice of the 33rd year—the year in which it is almost universally agreed our Redeemer was crucified—the hour of the day the same, mid-day—the earthquake and darkness simultaneous in both cases. The eclipse must have been preternatural, as it could not take place, in the natural course, at full moon. Moreover, according to the Astronomical Tables, there had not been an eclipse of the sun in the 33rd year of our era—the year referred to by Phlegon. But there had been one in the 29th year of our era, on the 24th of November, at nine o'clock in the morning, which could have no connexion with that mentioned by Phlegon (Bergier, Dict. Theol. Eclipse).

Owing to the mention of "*the sixth hour,*" by St. Matthew, a question is here raised about reconciling St. Mark and St. John, regarding the precise hour of the crucifixion. There is no even apparent discrepancy between the other Evangelists. St. Mark (xv. 25) says, "*It was the third hour, and they crucified Him.*" St. John (xix. 14-16) says, "*It was about the sixth hour,*" when Pilate condemned Him to

the death of the cross. To reconcile these apparently conflicting statements—for, it is quite certain from the Evangelists, that our Lord was crucified *after* He was condemned—has caused interpreters no small perplexity. Some would have it, that there was an error of copyists, who transcribed *third* for sixth, or sixth for third, in either of the Evangelists, the Greek letter which designates *three* (γ) being mistaken for (ς) which designates the number *six*. In which—Mark or John—the mistake occurred, is also a matter of dispute. The greater extrinsic authority is in favour of the correctness of the reading of St. Mark, in regard to which there is no variety of codices; whereas, in some codices, there is a variety, as regards St. John. For instance, the Codex of Cambridge, and one of the Royal codices, dated the eighth century, have the *third* hour instead of the sixth in St. John. Some of the ancient writers quoted by Griesbach (Novum. Testam. Græce in Joan xix. 14), are in favour of the reading of these codices. Among those writers is the author of the Paschal Chronicle, who says, “that in the copy of the Gospel written by St. John’s own hand, and preserved in the Church of the Ephesians,” the *third* hour is found instead of the sixth. Patrizzi (Annot. c. xcv.) seems to lean to this opinion. The mode of reconciling both Evangelists, commonly adopted by those who maintain the accuracy of the reading in both is as follows: By *hour*, they understand, not common hours of sixty minutes each, but great hours, containing each, three common hours. According to the division of time, introduced by the Romans, and adopted by the Jews (see c. xx. 1), the day was divided into four equal parts, each part containing three common hours, and the night, into four equal parts, or watches, of three hours each. Following this computation of time, these interpreters say, both accounts are perfectly consistent, as our Lord was crucified towards the close of the great hour, termed the *third*, which commenced at nine o’clock, and terminated at twelve. And “*about the sixth hour*,” viz., some time before twelve o’clock, when the great hour termed the *sixth*, commenced. For, the four great hours were termed—*first*, commencing at six, and terminating at nine o’clock; *third*, commencing at nine, and terminating at twelve; *sixth*, commencing at twelve, and ending at three P.M.; and *ninth*, commencing at three, and ending with six, or sunset. Mauduit undertakes to refute this opinion in a Dissertation (xxxvi), in which the reasoning is more specious than solid.

For, the *first* great hour commenced at sunrise, corresponding at the equinoxes with our six o’clock, and ending at nine. The next great hour, termed “*third*,” from the common hour immediately preceding, commenced at nine, and ended at twelve o’clock, or mid-day. The next, termed *sixth*, commenced at twelve o’clock, and ended at three P.M., and the next, or last great hour, termed *ninth*, commenced at three o’clock, and terminated at six, or sunset.

As regards the darkness which took place at the crucifixion of our Lord, there is a great diversity of opinion as to its *nature* and *extent*. That the darkness was preternatural, can hardly be questioned by any Christian. If produced by a total eclipse of the sun, it must be preternatural; for, it occurred when it was full moon, and the sun in the opposite side of the heavens, it being Jewish Paschal time, which always took place on the fourteenth of the moon. Moreover, a total eclipse can naturally last only a *quarter* of an hour at most; whereas, this lasted *three hours*. Some interpreters suppose the darkness to be caused by the preternatural accumulation of the densest clouds, similar to that preternaturally brought on the land of Egypt, by the stretching forth of the hand of Moses. At all events, from whatever cause proceeding, it would seem, from what is recorded as happening near the cross, that the darkness was not so dense as that the bystanders could not see one another, or see what was passing.

As to the *extent* of this darkness, those who have recourse to the hypothesis of a thick *mist*, arising from sulphureous vapours, such as precede and accompany earthquakes, limit it, as a matter of course, to the vicinity of Jerusalem. Origen and some others confine it to the land of Judea, a signification which the words, the "*entire earth*," sometimes bear in SS. Scripture. These say, if we confine it to the land of Judea, it would more forcibly point out the heavy anger of God, forcibly shadowed forth, as about to fall on the Jewish nation in particular, in punishment of the horrible crime of Deicide, the guilt and consequences of which they invoked "*on themselves, and on their children*." Most of the ancient Fathers and writers, and many eminent modern interpreters, understand it to extend to the entire earth. In proof of this *universal extension* of the darkness, they quote the positive declaration of three Evangelists; also, the authority of Thallus, in his *Syriac Histories*, from which, though now lost, passages are quoted by Tertullian, Eusebius, &c., with whom Phlegon, already quoted, is perfectly in accord. We are told by Suidas, that Dionysius, the Areopagite, who was at Hieropolis, in Egypt, at this time, on observing this eclipse of the sun, said to his friend, Apollophanus, "*aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur*." These events were recorded in the annals of the Roman Empire. Tertullian, in his apology, refers the unbelievers of his day to these archives, in proof of the phenomena which occurred at the death of Christ, "*Eum mundi casum*"—referring to the eclipse—"relatum in Archivis vestris habetis." Some writers, however, attach no great weight to these latter testimonies. They question whether Thallus lived before Christ, and they endeavour to show that the writings, ascribed to Dionysius, are spurious. In their objections to the universal extension of the darkness, they go too far, judging of what was clearly preternatural, as they would of the occurrence of merely natural phenomena.

The Fathers, all of whom (except Origen, who is followed by Maldonatus), hold the *universal extension* of the darkness, say, the sun withheld his light, out of sympathy with his Lord, so as not to witness such a horrid act of parricide as the Jews committed, in crucifying the Author of life, the great Creator of the universe. "It appears to me," says St. Jerome, "that the great luminary of the world hid his rays, not to witness the Lord hanging on the cross, and not to afford light to the impious blasphemers." Most likely, the Almighty had in view, in the phenomena which occurred at the crucifixion, to prove the Divinity of His Son, and confute those who challenged Him, "*si filius Dei est, descendat de cruce*," &c.

46. "*And about the ninth hour*," &c., corresponding with our three o'clock in the afternoon. St. Mark says, "*At the ninth hour*." But, there is no contradiction, as men usually say a thing happened at the ninth, which happened about that hour, whether shortly before or shortly after it. It would seem that nothing occurred, and that silence prevailed from the sixth till the ninth hour; that, during the darkness, the Jews were seized with awe. Similar silence prevailed during the Egyptian darkness, which was a type of that occurring at the death of our Lord.

"*Jesus cried with a loud voice*." This loud cry was manifestly preternatural, as always, when men are either dying or in dread of death, the voice first fails, and becomes weak. "*Eli, Eli, lamma Sabaethani*." These words commence the twenty-first Psalm, and our Redeemer, by using them, wishes to convey to the Jews, that He was the subject of this Psalm; that David spoke in His person, and that the entire Psalm, which minutely describes, beforehand, His Passion, was literally fulfilled in Him. In this Psalm, according to the Septuagint rendering, the pronoun, "*My*," is expressed but once, "*O God, My God*," and the words, "*look upon Me*," are inserted.

But, the Hebrew has it, as spoken here by our Lord, according to the narrative of the Evangelists. Instead of "*Sabaethani*," the Hebrew in the Psalm is *Azabtani*; but, it is to be borne in mind, that after their return from the Babylonish captivity, the Jews spoke not the pure Hebrew, but the Syro-Chaldaic, in which language our Redeemer on the cross said, "*Sabaethani*," the Chaldaic, for "*Azabtani*." St. Mark (xv. 34), has, "*Eloi, Eloi*." This signifies the same as "*Eli, Eli*." But, most likely, it was the latter form our Redeemer used, as this would give clearer grounds for the mistake on the part of those who overheard Him, that *He called for Elias*.

"*Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" Our Redeemer made use of this vehement appeal not as a question having for object to ascertain what He did not know; for, He knew all things. It is merely a complaint, uttered for the purpose of awakening our attention to the cause of His mysterious abandonment by His Father, for the purpose of conveying to us, that He was abandoned, because He became a vicarious offering in our place, to atone for the sins of the world, and to cause us to inquire, why He was abandoned, and thus to increase our love and gratitude. These words are said by some of the holy Fathers, to have been uttered in the person of sinners, for whom He suffered. This, they say, the following words would show: "*Longe a salute mea verba delictorum meorum*" (Psa. 21). They may be also a prayer, entreating His Heavenly Father to put an end to His sufferings, and to allow them to continue no longer, "*exauditus est pro sua reverentia*" (Heb. x. 7). The word, "*forsaken*," merely signifies, that He was left to suffer fearful torments without being rescued from them; or, it may mean, that His Divinity withdrew from His human nature every, even the slightest, consolation.

Our Lord thus conveys to us, that, although He bore all this meekly and uncomplainingly, in the course of His Passion; that, while His great patience, His praying for His persecutors, His tender solicitude for His Blessed Mother, &c., might lead men to suppose He suffered but little; still, He suffered most intensely on the cross, as He did in the garden, when He prayed that, "*this bitter chalice might pass away*," &c. From the words our Lord uttered after this, it would seem He had been alive on the cross after "*the ninth hour*," as He had been affixed to the same cross before the *sixth*. Hence, He hung on the cross more than *three hours*, which shows us the extent of His suffering, and is calculated to challenge our deepest gratitude and love. It is to the loud cry, "*My God*," &c., St. Paul refers, when he says, "*qui, cum clamore magno*," &c. (Heb. v. 7.)

The shocking blasphemy of Calvin, who says, this loud cry proceeded from despair, on the part of our Lord, is sufficiently refuted by His dying words, so full of sweetness and calm resignation, "*in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*."

The seven last words of our Redeemer on the cross are—1. "*Father, forgive them*," &c. (Luke xxiii. 34). 2. "*Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise*" (Luke xxiii. 43). 3. "*Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother*" (John xix. 26, 27). 4. "*Eli, Eli*," &c., here. 5. "*I thirst*" (John xix. 28). 6. "*It is consummated*." 7. "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*" (Luke xxiii. 46).

47. St. Jerome understands this of the Roman soldiers, who, having heard from the Jews that Elias was to return at the coming of the Messiah, ignorant of the Syro-Chaldaic idiom, imagined our Redeemer was calling on Elias, when He exclaimed, "*Eli, Eli*," &c.; and this derives probability from the fact, that it was the Roman soldiers that gave Him the vinegar (Luke xxiii. 36). Should it refer to the Jews, St. Jerome is of opinion, that they, intentionally perverting our Lord's words, in derision of His claims to be the Messiah, affected to think He called on

Elias, for the purpose of attributing weakness to Him, in calling on Elias to come to His aid.

48. St. John (xix. 28) gives the connexion between this and the foregoing. He says, that our Redeemer, in order "*that the Scripture might be fulfilled,*" viz., the words of the Psalmist, "*in siti mea aceto me potaverunt*" (Psa. lxxviii. 22), said, "*I thirst.*" Such thirst was the natural effect of the exquisite tortures He had been enduring—of the almost entire effusion of His sacred blood. He had, moreover, tasted nothing from the preceding evening, and He was parched from continual journeyings, watching, and afflictions. The words convey to us His ardent thirst for the salvation of souls. A vessel of vinegar was usually at hand on occasion of crucifixion, according to some, for the purpose, in case of fainting, of reviving the exhausted vital spirits of the sufferers. In the present instance, it is maintained that the vinegar was given by the Roman soldiers, not only for the purpose of deriding Him (Luke xxiii. 36), as mock King of the Jews, but also, for the purpose of torturing Him with the bitter draught which caused still greater thirst, and of prolonging His tortures. Others maintain, that it was rather for the purpose of accelerating His death the vinegar was given, as vinegar has the effect of penetrating and instilling its virulence into all the wounds and members of the body, and thus accelerating death. The Roman soldiers were anxious for this, as the day was far gone, and the hour for dinner long past.

"*One of them,*" the soldiers (Luke xxiii. 36), "*took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar.*" There was a vessel of vinegar placed there (John xix. 29). The "*sponge,*" which absorbed the fluid, was more convenient for ministering a drink than a vessel would be, to one raised aloft. He could suck out of the sponge the fluid it absorbed. "*And put it on a reed.*" St. John (xix. 29) tells us, the "*reed*" was a stalk of hyssop, around which they fastened the sponge. A certain kind of "*hyssop*" grows longer in the East than with us. This was sufficiently long to reach, with the outstretched hand of a man, the mouth of our Redeemer, suspended on the cross.

49. "*And the others said: Let be, let us see,*" &c. The meaning of "*let be*" is, hold, *be easy*, disregarding everything else, "*let us see,*" &c. The words, "*let be,*" is read in the singular here, "*sine,*" as if addressed by the bystanders and soldiers to the man who gave him the bitter potion, as if to say, cease from giving Him vinegar, which may accelerate His death before Elias comes, who may find Him dead on his arrival; or, in the opinion of those who hold, that the vinegar had rather the effect of prolonging life, *stay*, do not prevent Him from being refreshed with vinegar, in order that, by prolonging His life, we may "*see whether Elias will come,*" &c. In consequence of the phenomena which accompanied our Redeemer's death, they doubt whether He was not the Messiah, whose precursor, both Jews and Christians believed Elias to be; and this the Roman soldiers, most likely, heard from the Jews. St. Mark (xv. 36) employs the words, "*stay ye,*" in the plural, *sinite*, as if addressed to the bystanders by the soldier who administered the vinegar. Likely, both versions are true. The soldier addressed the bystanders, and they, in turn, addressed him, according to the meaning already assigned. Some even understand the words to mean, "*stay,*" that is, keep aloof, leave Him alone, as it is only when alone, Elias who would not come in a crowd, will approach Him. This potion was different from that in verse 34; both were given in different circumstances.

50. "*With a loud voice,*" which was preternatural; since, a man's voice on the

point of expiring, fails and becomes weak. But, in the case of our Lord, His voice was preternaturally and miraculously restored. And He cried out "*with a loud voice*," to show the perfect voluntariness of His death; and that it took place, not through any failure of the powers of nature. "*He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it up again*" (John x. 18); and also to show, that He was God, which the centurion inferred from this fact (Mark xv. 39). St. Luke (xxiii. 46) tells us, He uttered, with a loud voice, the words, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*," as if to say, He deposited His soul with Him, because He was to resume it again. St. John (xix. 30) tells us, "*And bowing down His head, He gave up the ghost*." He bowed down His head *before* giving up the ghost, which is done by all other men after expiring, to show He did so voluntarily, and not from any infirmity. "*He commends His spirit*," as a deposit, into the hands of His Heavenly Father, from whom He is shortly to receive it back, to be united to His body at the Resurrection.

TEXT.

51. *And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent.*

52. *And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose,*

53. *And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many.*

54. *Now the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God.*

55. *And there were there many women afar off, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him.*

56. *Among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.*

COMMENTARY.

51. "*And behold*." St. Augustine observes, that "*behold*" shows these things to have happened, in consequence of and after the death of Christ; hence, what St. Luke states (xxiii. 45) is mentioned by anticipation. "*The veil of the temple*." Josephus tells us (Lib. 5 de Bel. Jud., c. 5), that there were *two* veils in the temple—the one, before the *Holy place* or *Sanctum*; the other, before the *Sanctum Sanctorum*. It is not agreed among the ancients which of these two veils was rent in two. The words of St. Paul to the Hebrews (x.), would add weight to the opinion which understand it of the *inner* veil; and this was properly, "*THE veil*." Various reasons are assigned for this. Besides the *general* reason affecting all these prodigies that occurred at the death of Christ, viz., that they had for object to show His power and Divinity, and to show forth the detestation of Jewish barbarity towards the Son of God, there are special reasons assigned also, and among these, as regards the rending of the veil, is, that it was meant to show, by a very bold figure of speech, that the temple could not stand the shocking impiety practised towards its Lord and Master, and that it manifested its horror by rending its garments, in imitation of the Jewish people on occasions of impiety, and especially of blasphemy. It was also mystically meant, to teach us that the mysteries of the law, hitherto concealed before the coming of Christ, were now clearly made known to us, by the faith secured to us through the death of Christ; and also to show us, that the road to heaven, the true sanctuary, typified by the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, was now opened to mankind, by His death (Heb. ix. 8).

"*And the earth quaked*." This was meant to show the Divinity of our Redeemer,

the Lord of heaven and earth. He it was that caused this quaking of the earth, in virtue of His Divine power, of which the earthquake is a striking indication. It also meant, as did the splitting of the rocks, to mark the natural horror which all creatures felt at the shocking crime of the Jews, and their sympathy with the Lord of creation in His barbarous sufferings. The quaking of the earth is sometimes employed in Scripture, to denote the anger of the Almighty. (Psa. xvii., &c.) It is the opinion of some, that this was the same as the earthquake which happened in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, the greatest on record. It is mentioned by Pliny and Macrobius. The latter tells us, it destroyed no less than twelve cities in Asia. Origen and others, however, maintain, that the present earthquake went no farther than the Temple of Jerusalem, and the portions mentioned in SS. Scriptures, viz., the veil, the rocks, the tombs, &c.; and they seem to think the confining of the earthquake to Jerusalem and the temple, &c., would more clearly indicate, beforehand, the destruction of the Jewish temple and worship, in punishment of Jewish impiety, in crucifying the Lord of glory.

"*And the rocks were rent.*" St. Cyril (Catechesi 13) tells us, traces of this are visible in Calvary to the present day. Shaw, the Oriental traveller, tells us, after minutely examining everything on Calvary, that the aperture in the rock on Calvary is a miracle, which must inspire one with feelings of religious awe and wonder. Millar, in his history of *the Propagation of Christianity*, states, that a Deist was converted on seeing that the fissures in the rock were contrary to what takes place in ordinary earthquakes, as these immense fissures were not according to the veins and weakest parts of the rock. These extraordinary events, which could not be considered fortuitous, indicate the atrocity of Jewish impiety, the anger of God, the Divinity of our Lord, the hard, stony hearts of His crucifiers, who stood unmoved, while the very rocks were melted unto pity.

52. "*And the graves were opened,*" in virtue of the efficacy of the death of Christ, who, though crucified, was the Lord of life and death, who conquered death, and restored life to man. Whether the graves were opened immediately on the death of Christ, or only after His resurrection, is disputed. Some maintain, that the graves were now opened, in order to show that it was done, in virtue of Christ's Passion; but, that it was only after our Lord's resurrection, the dead arose; because it was meet, that He who was the first-born among the dead, "*the first-fruits of them that sleep*" (1 Cor. xv. 20), should be the first to rise, and then others after Him. Others, who cannot see the meaning of graves opening, without the dead arising, maintain, that it was only after the resurrection the graves were opened. So that the entire of these two verses (52-53), are affected by the words (v. 53), "*after His resurrection.*" But, that St. Matthew records the events mentioned in this verse by anticipation, in connexion with the death of Christ; because, it was in virtue of the merits of His death, they occurred.

"*Many bodies of the saints*"—reanimated and reunited to their souls—"arose," from the slumbers of the tomb, to enter on an immortal life. It is most likely, that these never again returned to the tomb; but, that they were brought by our Lord into heaven, as so many trophies to grace the triumph of His ascension. This is the common opinion of modern commentators. Nor are the words of St. Paul (Heb. xi. 40) opposed to this, as there reference is made to the laws affecting the *General Resurrection of all*; here, to a special and exceptional privilege.

53. The Evangelist mentions, by anticipation, the events of this verse and the

preceding; because, they belong to the prodigies having immediate connexion with the death of Christ.

"*The Holy City*," Jerusalem, so long consecrated to the true worship of God, where stood His holy Temple; and although now polluted by the crimes of the Jews, still, it was, hitherto, the seat of His religion, consecrated by the presence and miracles of the Son of God, and the mysteries of His life, death, and resurrection. In it, was accomplished the work of Redemption; and from it, the Gospel of Salvation was sent forth into the entire earth.

"*They came into the Holy City*"—the graves being outside the walls—"and appeared to many," to those witnesses alone pre-ordained by God; to those whose faith it was important to have confirmed, as our Lord Himself appeared not to all the people, but to His Apostles, &c. Who these "*saints*," thus raised to life, were, cannot be known for certain. It is most likely, they belonged to that class who had some peculiar relation to Christ, either of descent, or promise, or type, or hope, or faith, or chastity, or sanctity, such as Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Melchisedech, David, Job, Jonas, Moses, Josue, Samuel, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechial, and the other prophets; and, most likely, some of them belonged to those, who lately died in sanctity and in the faith, such as Simeon, &c. The fact of their having been recognized by their contemporaries, would prove that they were not long dead. However, the ancient Fathers and Prophets might, from certain peculiar qualities, be recognized by the Jews existing at this time, and especially, by the favoured persons, those "*many*" to whom they appeared. The *object* of their resurrection was, doubtless, to show that the power of the grave was destroyed by the life and immortality purchased for us by Christ; and thus to serve as a pledge of the General Resurrection; and also to be the associates, witnesses, and heralds of His resurrection.

54. "*The centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus.*" St. Mark (xv. 39) says, "*The centurion who stood over against Him, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done,*" viz., the darkness, splitting of the rocks, &c.; but especially seeing that He gave up the ghost, loudly crying out in this manner (Mark, *ibidem*), "*were greatly afraid,*" lest the vengeance which they felt assured, God would inflict for the murder of His Son, would, in the first instance, fall on themselves, as His executioners. St. Luke says (xxiii. 47), "*The centurion . . . glorified God,*" by his faith and confession of the truth, "*saying: Indeed this was a just man.*" St. Mark (xv. 39), "*Indeed this man was the Son of God.*" It is very likely, the centurion and the soldiers said both, viz., that He was a "*just man,*" unjustly punished; nay, what He proclaimed Himself to be, "*truly the Son of God,*" whose Divinity these wonderful events proclaimed.

They heard the Jews say, our Lord was crucified for proclaiming Himself the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Hence, seeing the wonders wrought in attestation of it, they at once proclaim Him to be what He said He was, viz., the natural Son of God. These may be regarded as the earliest among the Gentiles, whom the merits of Christ's Passion and His grace reached, and also the first-fruits of Christ's prayer on the cross for His persecutors. St. Luke (xxiii. 48) assures us, that not only the Roman centurion and his associates, but also that "*all the multitude who came together to that sight and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts,*" partly from feelings of sorrow and detestation of the horrid deed now perpetrated, in which they had concurred; and partly, from fear of the vengeance it would entail. These might be regarded, as shadowing forth the conversion of the Jews, which took place especially at the following Pentecost.

There is no mention made of the Chief Priests becoming converted, or being any way affected by the death of Christ.

55. "*And there were many women afar off*," that is, viewing our Redeemer's sufferings from a distance, as the Greek words (*ἀπὸ μακρόθεν*) signify. That the Blessed Virgin was among those present and near the cross, we learn from St. John (xix. 25); so near that our Redeemer could address her. Very likely, the women referred to here, may have been sometimes near the cross, and at other times, farther away from it, owing to the soldiers and crowds who came to see the spectacle. These women are here commended for their constancy and love, for having followed Him, and having, after the Apostles deserted Him, stood by His cross, witnesses of His patience and meekness, and death—for having followed Him far away from their own country, and for having administered to Him and His, by their personal services and kind offices, and for having out of their own means supplied His wants.

56. "*Among whom was Mary Magdalen*," commonly supposed to be the same, of whom mention is made as the sister of Lazarus and Martha. Out of her, our Lord had cast seven devils, and, now, from gratitude for the recovery of health of mind and body, she follows Him unto death. "*And Mary, the mother of James and Joseph*." She is called, "*Mary of Cleophas*," from her husband, Cleophas. She was the sister of the Blessed Virgin (John xix. 25).

"*And the mother of the sons of Zebedee*," called Salome (Mark xv. 40). There were others besides. But these are specially mentioned as being the most remarkable in their pious offices to our Blessed Lord. Moreover, these remained for His sepulture, when the others went away. It is very probable, that St. John took the Blessed Virgin away from the scene of sorrow immediately after the death of her beloved Son. St. Luke says (xxiii. 49), "*And all His acquaintance, and the women . . . stood afar off*." From this it appears, that some men also were there, as contradistinguished from the "*women*." Thus were verified the words of the Psalmist, "*amici mei et proximi mei . . . et qui juxta me erant, de longe steterunt*."

The words, "*all His acquaintance*," are not meant to convey, that all His acquaintance were there even at a distance, but only that such as were recognizable there—and St. John is the only one of whom express mention is made in the Gospel—were at a distance, and this latter is to be understood in a comparative sense. They were at a distance, compared with the soldiers and the crowd that were insulting Him; but, still near enough to witness His sufferings and hear His voice whenever He spoke. Here in due order of narrative should be inserted some occurrences mentioned by St. John only, in the history of our Lord's Passion (John xix. 31-37).

TEXT

57. *And when it was evening, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus.*

58. *He went to Pilate, and asked the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded that the body should be delivered.*

59. *And Joseph taking the body, wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth.*

60. *And laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the monument, and went his way.*

61. *And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre.*

COMMENTARY.

57. "*When it was evening*," when evening approached, shortly before sunset; for, as the Sabbath commenced at sunset, they could, then, take no active steps towards taking down from the cross, or burying the body of Jesus.

"*There came a certain rich man*," &c. This is mentioned, because, no poor or humble man could approach the Roman Governor on such a business. "*Of Arimathea*." He was a native of this place, or sprung from it, although it is thought he resided at Jerusalem, as appears from his having hewed "*his own monument out of rock*," &c. (v. 60.) Arimathea was a town of Judea which St. Jerome tells us was the same as "*Ramathaim Sophim*" (1 Kings i.), eighteen or twenty miles north-west of Jerusalem. "*Named Joseph*." This minute description gains greater credit for the narrative. It was a name celebrated in the history of the people of God, rendered specially illustrious by the Patriarch, Joseph, the son of Jacob; and another Joseph, still more illustrious, the foster-father of the Son of God. "*Who also himself was a disciple of Jesus*." This accounts for the pious solicitude manifested by him to have the honour of sepulture paid our Redeemer, and to have Him rescued from the ignominy of having His sacred remains cast into the common receptacle of malefactors and criminals. St. John (xix. 38) tells us, "*he was a disciple, but in private for fear of the Jews*;" he was "*a noble counsellor*" (St. Mark xv. 43); "*a senator, a just and good man*" (Luke xxiii. 50, 51), "*who also himself waited for the kingdom of God*." Being a "*counsellor*," βουλευτης, or, decurio, which in the Provinces of Rome, designated a municipal honour equal to that of Senator at Rome. He belonged to the *Sanhedrin*, and, most likely, attended the Council that sat in judgment on our Blessed Lord, but he "*did not consent to their counsel and doings*" (Luke xxiii. 51). To him may be applied, in a special manner, the words of the Psalmist, "*beatus vir qui non abiit in consilio impiorum*"—"he had been expecting the kingdom of God," which means, that he firmly believed Jesus to be the Messiah, whose coming he had ardently longed for.

58. "*He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus*." St. Mark (xv. 43) observes, that he did this courageously, or "*boldly*," to convey to us the spirit of fortitude with which God, on this occasion, endowed him who hitherto was only "*in private a disciple of Jesus*," from feelings of fear. He begged our Redeemer's body, for the purpose of honourable interment, and to have it removed from the bodies of the common herd of malefactors, thus fulfilling the words of Scripture, "*erit sepulchrum ejus gloriosum*." St. Mark informs us, that Pilate wondered that He should be dead so soon (for sometimes persons crucified lived for some time, nay, for two days, on the cross); and that he sent for the centurion, to know if it were so, and having been assured of it by the centurion, who guarded Him, he gave the body to Joseph, or, as it is here, "*he commanded the body to be delivered*." All this was brought about by God's overruling providence, in order that there would be no room for questioning or cavilling about the truth of our Redeemer's death, or the reality of His resurrection from the dead. Pilate wished, by this, to make some atonement for the crime of condemning to death an innocent person; and, most likely, Joseph pleaded his well-known innocence as a reason for obtaining His body, in order to secure for it the rights of decent sepulture. "*To be delivered*," that is, given back. For, Pilate himself gave Him to His executioners, and now he demands Him back.

59, 60. "*Taking His body*" ("*down*," from the cross, Mark, Luke), "*wrapt it up*

in a clean linen cloth," which he bought for the purpose (Mark xv. 46), which was, therefore, not only clean, but quite new.

"*And laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock.*" St. John adds, "*wherein no man had been yet laid*" (John xix. 41). The piety of Joseph towards our Blessed Lord, is manifested—1st. By his having taken Him down from the cross; thus, regardless of the censure of his countrymen, who regarded the touch of such a body as a pollution. 2ndly. By his having wrapped it up in fine linen, which he bought for the purpose, and, aided by Nicodemus (John xix. 39), perfuming it with spices, composed of "*a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound,*" thus sparing no expense to bestow on Him the honours of a costly burial, bestowed on the rich and noble alone among the Jews. 3rdly. By placing Him, who had not whereon to lay His head during life, and no burial-place at death, in His own new sepulchre, hewn in a rock, in his garden, which was nigh at hand. All this, although intended by Joseph solely to honour his Lord, was, still, arranged by God's providence, to ensure the faith in His resurrection. For, as no other was laid in the tomb, so, no other could be said to have risen; and, as it was hewed in a solid rock, it could not be said, the disciples took away the body, through any opening in the walls, or by undermining the foundation, or raising the roof of the monument. If such was the piety of these holy men towards the *dead* body of our Redeemer, how great should not be our respect, reverence, and devotion towards His *living, immortal body*, which we daily receive in the Blessed and Adorable Eucharist?

"*And he rolled a great stone to the mouth of the monument, and went his way,*" to prevent any violation of the place, or of His body, and to secure the linen and the spices. This was intended by Providence, to insure more firmly the faith of the Resurrection.

61. "*The other Mary,*" refers to Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (Mark xv. 47). "*Sitting over against the sepulchre.*" That there were more than these two present, is clear from St. Luke (xxiii. 55); but these two are specified, because, they were more remarkable, and showed the most sedulous anxiety. These pious women could not be torn from the cross while our Redeemer hung upon it, and, without mingling with the men, who were engaged in depositing His sacred body in the tomb, they remained close enough to the sepulchre to see "*how His body was laid*" (Luke xxiii. 55), in order, that, after the Sabbath was over, on which no work could be done, they might come back and embalm His body with spices and ointment, which they purchased for the purpose, immediately after He was committed to the tomb (Luke xxiii. 56). From the next chapter, it will be seen that they came back for the purpose of executing their pious intention.

TEXT.

62. *And the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate,*

63. *Saying : Sir, we have remembered, that that seducer said, while he was yet alive : After three days I will rise again.*

64. *Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day : lest perhaps his disciples come, and steal him away, and say to the people, he is risen from the dead : and the last error shall be worse than the first.*

65. *Pilate said to them : You have a guard : go, guard it as you know.*

66. *And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting guards.*

COMMENTARY.

62. "*The next day, which followed the day of preparation,*" viz., the Sabbath-day. However, the Evangelist does not call it by that name, since, as regarded the Jews, it was anything but a Sabbath, or a day of religious rest. Here, the Chief Priests are silently taxed with inconsistency. Those who heretofore had so often calumniously charged our Lord with a violation of the Sabbath, while performing works of charity and benevolence, make no scruple whatever in going to a Pagan judge, and demanding an armed guard to place them at the tomb, or, in sealing up the tomb and closing it—all operations involving much labour, and not permitted, either by law or tradition. Friday is called "*preparation,*" or *Parascere*, because, on that day, the Jews prepared all things appertaining to food, &c., required on the following day—the Sabbath—on which day, they were not allowed to dress food, kindle a fire, &c. (Exod. xvi. 23-29.)

"*The Chief Priests,*" &c., maddened with rage against Jesus, are not content with persecuting Him even unto death; but, they must follow Him, beyond the grave, destroy His fame, and blot out His name for ever. How admirably these wicked men illustrate the description given of the impious (Isa. lviii. 20, 21; Job xv. 21). The very attempt at guarding against imposture in the case of our Redeemer, not only argues their disregard for the Sabbath, and convicts them of trying, deliberately and knowingly, to stifle the truth of His resurrection, while it deprives them of all pretext for saying, His body was stolen; but, it furnishes the strongest confirmation of the resurrection, "*iniquity has lied to itself,*" and the words of Scripture illustrated. "*There is no wisdom . . . against the Lord*" (Prov. xxi. 30); "*He destroys the wisdom of the wise,*" &c. In other cases, they might plead innocence; here, they sin inexcusably, against the known truth, and against the Holy Ghost.

63. "*We have remembered, that this seducer said,*" &c. Lest Pilate should wonder they did not ask for an armed guard before this, they affect forgetfulness of what they had before been aware of; now, affecting to remember it, they wish to adopt precautionary measures. Although our Redeemer referred to His resurrection, on some occasions, in addressing the Jews (Matt. xii. 39; John ii. 19), still, they did not clearly understand Him; since, He spoke clearly to His Apostles alone on this subject. Hence, it must be from Judas, who betrayed his Master's secrets, as well as His person, they heard it, or from the general rumour regarding it, which prevailed among the people. Their chief object in this proceeding was to foil, as far as possible, the prediction of Christ, which they feared would be verified on this subject, and the prodigies which occurred at His death served to awaken their apprehensions still more.

"*That seducer,*" the opprobrious epithet they bestowed on the Author of life, and God of all truth.

"*After three days I will rise again,*" that is, three days commenced, or partially accomplished, or, *within three days*, or, *after the third day* shall have arrived.

64. The Chief Priests, therefore, ask Pilate to have "*the sepulchre guarded until the third day,*" that is, the close of *the third day*. Our Redeemer did not say at what hour He would arise. This explains what they understood by the words, "*after three days.*" For, if the words meant that He would not rise till after three days, there would be no meaning in placing a guard till the term of three days had passed, as His disciples would not think of removing Him till the term specified by

Himself had expired. Moreover, the guard should be continued, not *until* the third day, but *after* the third day; since, it was only then, in the supposed interpretation, He was to arise.

"*Lest His disciples come,*" &c. This was sheer hypocrisy and pretence. Their object in asking for a guard was, that they would prevent His rising, and, if necessary, to apprehend, or kill Him. For, in reality, they had no fears of His frightened, scattered, timorous disciples, who, if themselves imposed upon, could have no motive in perpetuating the deception, but, rather, every motive in exposing it, and confessing their own error, nor any hopes of succeeding in such an attempt, considering their position among their countrymen. They lacked all the human means of successfully propagating the deception. They had neither eloquence, nor wealth, nor family influence, nor numbers. This the High Priests well knew. Their fear about the disciples was a mere frivolous pretence. Their real motive in asking for a guard, was to prevent our Redeemer's prediction being verified.

"*So*"—in case they succeeded in persuading the people of the fact of His having risen in accordance with His own prediction on the subject—"the last error shall be worse than the first." The first error, or imposture, was the teaching of Christ, and particularly His claiming to be the Son of God. This error would be included in that regarding His resurrection; and, moreover, would derive further confirmation from it. Since, His raising Himself from the dead by His own power, in accordance with His prediction, would surely prove His Divinity.

The truth of this would involve Jews and Romans in the odium of having put to death the Author of life, and might serve as an incentive to wars and rebellions; and hence, the "*last error*" would be worse, *in itself*, because, it not only contained the former error, but also the most demonstrative proof of it, worse and more pernicious in its consequences, both in regard to Jews and Romans, and in regard to the numbers it would infect, and the difficulty of eradicating it; "*worse,*" in its extent, as it would extend, not alone to Judea, but to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Thus, these wicked men became prophets of their own disgrace, and of the glory of our Blessed Lord.

65. "*You have a guard,*" a company of soldiers, already placed at your service, for the crucifixion of this man. You are hereby allowed to use it, for the purpose of watching the sepulchre. The Greek, *εχετε*, may be rendered in the indicative or imperative, but the Vulgate version—*habetis*—in the indicative, is the most common, and the best sustained rendering of it. Some expositors (Calmet, &c.), by "*guard,*" understand a company of soldiers, appointed to guard the temple. But there is no evidence that these could be used for any other purpose. Others understand it, of the band stationed in the Castle of Antonia, for the purpose of quelling any tumult in the city.

"*Go, guard it as you know,*" adopt whatever means you may think prudent and effectual. Pilate thus insinuates, he had no wish to mix himself up any longer in their local and religious concerns.

66. "*And they departing,*" going to the sepulchre, and bringing with them the appointed guard of soldiers, "*made sure the sepulchre with guards,*" by placing the necessary guard of soldiers around it. They probably communicated to these soldiers their real or pretended fears, regarding the resurrection of our Blessed Lord. Most likely, they threatened them with the consequences, on the part of the Governor, in case of unfaithfulness; and promised great rewards, in case they proved faithful, until after

the allotted time had passed. They, probably, had also instructed them, in case our Redeemer were really to arise, to put Him to death, as they may have formed the same notions of His renewed and immortal life, that they entertained regarding Lazarus, whom they thought to kill, after he was resuscitated from the grave (John xii. 10).

"Sealing the stone" (σφραγισαντες) with the public seal—"the stone" referred to (v. 60). They thus secured the sepulchre, in two ways, with the public seal, and with a guard of soldiers. Whether this was Pilate's seal, or that of the High Priests, is disputed. The latter is the more common opinion. St. Chrysostom, however, holds the former. They took these extraordinary precautions against the guard, in case they should be tampered with, and against the disciples also. Darius acted similarly, in regard to Daniel (Dan. vi. 17). All these extraordinary precautions, to guard against imposition, only served to render the truth of our Lord's glorious resurrection more certain and indisputable. Thus, the Almighty turned the devices of His enemies against themselves, "*destroying the wisdom of the wise, and rejecting the prudence of the prudent.*" and He thus demonstrated that, "*there is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel, against the Lord*" (Prov. xxi. 30).

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist gives an account of our Lord's resurrection, on Easter morning, and of the wonderful occurrences that took place in connexion with it—the earthquake, the appearance of angels at the tomb, the terror and stupefaction that seized on the guards (1-4). The consoling assurances on this head, given to the pious women, who came early to the sepulchre, by the angel who also instructed them to go at once and inform His disciples of the fact. On their way home, our Lord Himself meets them, and dispels all their fears (5-10). The obstinate impenitence of the Chief Priests, and their determined resistance to the known truth, in bribing the soldiers, with a large sum of money, to tell an unmeaning lie, viz., that the disciples came while they were asleep, and stole away our Lord's body (11-15). The apparition of our Lord to His Apostles on a mountain of Galilee, where He communicates to them the plenitude of His authority, armed with which they are commanded to go forth, as His legates, to preach the glad tidings of Redemption, to the end of time, to the entire world. He further promises them and their successors, to the end of the world, His never-ceasing, uninterrupted protection, to guard them against error and secure them against failure, while engaged in their glorious work, of saving the world.

TEXT.

AND in the end of the Sabbath when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2. And behold there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven : and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it :

3. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow.

4. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men.

5. And the angel answering, said to the women; Fear not you : for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.

6. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, and see the place, where the Lord was laid.

7. And going quickly, tell ye his disciples that he is risen : and behold he will go before you into Galilee : there you shall see him. Lo, I have foretold it to you.

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And in the end of the Sabbath, when it began to dawn,*" &c. Commentators labour under some difficulty in reconciling the apparent discrepancy between St. Matthew's own assertions here, viz., 1st., that the event took place "*in the end of the Sabbath,*" which was *evening*, as the words are rendered here by the Vulgate interpreter, "*Vespere autem Sabbati;*" and, 2ndly, that it occurred, "*when it began to dawn,*" early in the morning; and also between St. Matthew and the three other Evangelists, who expressly say, it occurred "*very early in the morning, the sun being now risen*" (Mark xvi. 2; Luke xxiv. 1); "*on the first day of the week, it being yet dark*" (John xx. 1). These apparent difficulties and contradictions will disappear by recurring to the original, in which the words rendered by the Vulgate, "*Vespere Sabbati,*" "*in the end of the Sabbath*" (οὐ ἐ δὲ σαββάτων), literally and strictly mean, *late*, or *long*, *after the Sabbath days*, or week had terminated. "*When*"—the entire night having intervened—"it began to dawn towards the first day of the week," that is, when the early dawn of the day, which was the first of the week, began. The Greek is, *eis μὲν τῶν σαββάτων*, unto *ONE* (or, first) of the *Sabbaths*. The cardinal *one* is put, by Hebrew usage, for the ordinal, *first*. "*Sabbaths,*" in the plural, merely designates the *week*, or *seven days* of the week. Called *Sabbath*, according to Hebrew usage, in honour of the great day of rest, "*jejuno bis in Sabbato,*" says the Pharisee in the Gospel. The days were called first, second, &c., of the Sabbath, according to the order they held in reference to the Sabbath-day.

Then, the event here referred to, occurred long after the Sabbath had ended (οὐ ἐ τῶν σαββάτων). For, an entire night had intervened. The Evangelist next specifies at what precise hour it occurred, viz., at that time of the morning following the Sabbath, when it began to dawn, towards the first of the Sabbath-days (εις μὲν τῶν σαββάτων). This explanation fully removes any apparent discrepancy between St. Matthew's own assertions, as referred to above; and also between him and the other Evangelists. The only point to be still cleared up is, how the words of St. Mark, "*the sun be now risen,*" can be reconciled with the words of the others, who say, "*it was only beginning to dawn; that it was very early;*" and St. John says, "*it was yet dark.*" Without recurring to the hypothesis, that there is question of different visits, or of different persons, in the words of the Evangelists—an hypothesis which is now generally rejected, as it is universally held that there is but question of the same visit and the same persons in the narrative of the four Evangelists—the words are commonly reconciled in this way. The other Evangelists speak of the time the pious women *left home* for the sepulchre, which was before the sun had risen, darkness being still over the earth; whereas, St. Mark speaks of the time they had *actually* arrived, the sun *having risen above the horizon*, in the interval between their *leaving home* and their *arrival* at the monument. And while the words of the other Evangelists convey to us an idea of the anxious care and pious sedulity of the holy women who left home in the darkness, immediately preceding day, the words of St. Mark clearly express what we should naturally expect, viz., that these pious women would hardly have ventured to come to the monument before daybreak. Others, with St. Augustine, who give the Greek aorist for "*risen,*" a present signification, say, the words of St. Mark mean, "*sole oriente,*" when the sun was rising, and the shades of darkness were still brooding over the earth. Any further apparent difference observable in the narrative of the Evangelists may be accounted for, if we bear in mind that no one of them describes all the circumstances of the resurrection. One describes circumstances omitted by the other. "*Vespere Sabbati,*" is taken for

the entire night succeeding the Sabbath. *Vespere* is sometimes used in this sense, in Scripture, "*evening and morning was one day.*" Should the Greek word, *οψε*, rendered *vespere*, be taken for night; then, the words, "*when it began to dawn.*" &c., show at what particular time of the night the occurrence in question took place, viz., at its close, when morning was breaking upon them.

"*Came Mary Magdalen*"—referred to (xxvii. 61)—"*and the other Mary,*" viz., Mary of Cleophas, the mother of James and Joseph (Mark xv. 40-47). Although there were other women with them (Luke xxxiii. 55); still, these are specially mentioned, as being the leaders, distinguished beyond the rest, for their pious sedulity and the manifestation of ardent and intense love for our Blessed Redeemer. St. Mark (xvi. 1), mentions, "*Mary, the mother of James and Salome.*" St. Luke adds, "*Joanna*" (xxiv. 10), "*and the other women that were with them.*" This Joanna, he tells us elsewhere (viii. 3), was the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward.

These pious women "*came to see the sepulchre,*" with the ulterior object of embalming the body with the spices they had previously purchased (Mark xvi. 1; Luke xxiv. 1). These spices they purchased on the evening of Friday, *before* the Sabbath commenced, and in the meantime they rested (Luke xxiii. 56). St. Mark (xvi. 1), insinuates, that it was on the evening *after* the Sabbath, they bought these spices. Hence, some interpreters say, that St. Luke describes this buying of the spices, by *anticipation*; while others say, both accounts are literally true. They bought some on Friday evening; and finding the quantity insufficient, they purchased more *after* the Sabbath was over, on Saturday evening. Most likely, these women were ignorant of the precaution taken by the Chief Priests, in placing a guard of soldiers, and sealing the mouth of the holy sepulchre, having returned home on Friday evening, before these occurrences took place. Had the Blessed Virgin been with them, she, surely, would have been mentioned. Her faith and her knowledge of His approaching resurrection, prevented her from taking any part in this pious preparation for embalming Him, as she knew it to be quite useless.

It is not mentioned at what precise hour our Redeemer had arisen, nor can we know for certain, as St. Jerome informs us. It occurred some time before the holy women had arrived, early in the morning. Some holy Fathers (Cyril of Alexandria, &c.), say, it was the hour before midnight. Others, early in the morning. Hence, St. Mark says (xvi. 9), He arose "*early the first day of the week,*" before the sun rose. His resurrection, or rather His glorious Nativity in His resurrection, is referred to no less than His first birth of the Virgin, in the words of the Royal Psalmist, "*ex utero ante luciferum genui te.*" For, St. Paul tells us (Acts xiii. 33), that in His resurrection are verified the words "*Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te.*" St. Augustine (apud Prosperum senten. 203), observes, that He was born at midnight; died at noon; rose at morning; and ascended at mid-day.

2. "*And behold there was a great earthquake.*" "*Behold,*" conveys that this earthquake occurred immediately in connexion with the approach of the women, on their way, just before arriving at the sepulchre. Hence, it was different from that which occurred at His death. As an earthquake occurred at Christ's death, so did it also at His resurrection, and that "*a great*" one. It was not for the purpose of displacing the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre and opening it for our Redeemer to come forth, that the earthquake occurred. For, as the holy Fathers tell us, our Redeemer came forth in virtue of the glorious gift of *subtilty*, without displacing the stone, or, breaking the seal, or causing any separation of their component parts, just as

He came forth from His mother's womb, or entered the chamber where His Apostles were assembled, after His resurrection, the door being shut. Moreover, we know when the earthquake occurred; but no one could say when precisely the resurrection took place, although it is quite certain, it took place before the earthquake in question. But, it took place for the purpose of displaying the majesty of God, in the person of His Angels. For, in SS. Scriptures, an earthquake denotes the presence and power of God (Psa. lxvii. 8, 9; xlviii.; ciii. 7)—and here the power of Christ, who, having broken the gates of death and taken away the spoils of hell, arose powerfully, thus giving an idea of the commotion which the preaching of His resurrection would cause throughout the earth; also, for the purpose of rousing the guards to a full consciousness of the presence of the Angels, and the event of the resurrection.

"*For an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven.*" Here is assigned the cause of the earthquake. It was caused by the descent and power of the Angel.

"*And coming, rolled back the stone.*" The Greek reading is: For, the Angel of the Lord *having descended* (καταβας), from heaven, and *having come* (προσελθων), rolled, &c. These words show by whose agency the stone was rolled back. The Angel had thus shown to the women, that the sepulchre was empty, Christ having already risen.

"*And sat upon it.*" This he did, in order to show that it was he rolled it back, and also, that he was the guard of his Lord's sepulchre, as St. Jerome expresses it. For, some persons might introduce another body, and endeavour to show that our Lord had not risen. Most likely, there is question of the same Angel referred to by St. Mark (xvi. 5), whom, he tells us, the women saw, "*on entering the sepulchre.*" How to reconcile this with St. Matthew's account, who insinuates that it was *outside* the sepulchre he sat on the stone (see next verse).

3. "*And his countenance was as lightning,*" &c. Besides wishing to show His heavenly origin, and the glory of the resurrection of the Divine Master whom they served, the Angels had also exhibited themselves in this brilliant, glorious form, with the view principally, of terrifying the guards, and deterring them from throwing any obstacle in the way of the pious women. And that this consequence resulted, appears from the following verse.

Commentators are somewhat perplexed in endeavouring to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements made by the four Evangelists with reference to the number, position, and apparition of the Angels on this occasion.

(a). Matthew and Mark speak of only *one* Angel; Luke and John, of *two*. The answer commonly given is, that *two* Angels appeared on the occasion. But, as Matthew and Mark had chiefly in view, to mention what the Angels said to the women, and as only *one* of them, most likely, addressed them; hence, they make no mention of the second. While, on the other hand, Luke and John, having chiefly in view, to show that the resurrection of our Lord was proved by the apparition of the Angels, speak of the two witnesses—the number required in every case of proof. *Two* are also mentioned at His ascension, as witnesses, that He was to return in the same manner from heaven. Or, it may be said, that the women saw *one* Angel, at one time; and *two*, at another; one, outside, sitting on the stone, who terrified the guards; and on coming nearer, and looking in, they saw two Angels, when the one that was on the right said, "*Why seek you Him that is living,*" &c.

(b). Matthew insinuates that the Angel sat on the stone *outside* the monument. For, it was rolled back from the mouth of the monument, and thus *outside* it; while St. Mark, who speaks of only *one*, and St. John, who speaks of *two* Angels, say it was *inside* the tomb the holy women saw them. The most probable answer is, that when

St. Mark speaks of their "*entering into the sepulchre*" (xvi. 5), he speaks of their preparing to enter. They saw the Angel *inside* the monument, inasmuch as the stone was placed within the enclosure which divided the monument from the rest of the garden.

(c). Matthew and Mark say, he *sat*; Luke, that he was *standing*. But, the word, *standing*, in Scriptural usage, indicates more the *presence* than the *position* of an object, "*de his stantibus, non gustabunt mortem*," that is, who are *present*. Also Luke (vii. 37, 38; xviii. 11); John (i. 26), or they might have *sat* at one time; and *stood* at another.

(d). St. John speaks of *Magdalen only*, as having seen the Angels (xx. 12). The other Evangelists speak of others besides, having seen them. But, this was owing to the fact, that the Evangelists omitted severally to mention all the circumstances of the resurrection. There is no contradiction between the Evangelists, one of whom mentions one circumstance which was merely omitted, but not denied, by the other. One Evangelist speaks of Mary Magdalen only, as the principal among those that came, but does not deny that others also came. In like manner, when St. John (xx. 2), says, she came to Peter and John, he does not contradict St. Luke, who says (xxiv. 10), that she and others announced the resurrection to the eleven. St. John does not deny this. For, as she did not come alone, although St. John makes express mention of her only, being the principal among the women that came, most remarkable for her ardent love and anxiety for our Lord; so, in like manner, she did not go to the two Apostles only, although they alone are mentioned by St. John; because, it was to those principally among the eleven, Magdalen spoke, as being the Apostles who most ardently loved our Lord. There is no contradiction between two writers, one of whom says less, the other more, by supplementing the former. The apparent contradiction between St. Luke (xxiv. 9), who says, they told the eleven the things they saw and heard; and St. John, who says, Magdalen said, in doubt, "*they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him*," which doubt could hardly be consistent with the vision and words of the Angels, may be thus explained: The women, even after the vision of the Angels, could hardly be induced to believe firmly in our Lord's resurrection, and therefore, while announcing the vision and words of the Angels, they also expressed their doubts and fears; and as St. John said nothing of the account given to the eleven, respecting the Angels, he supplies what the other Evangelists omit, regarding the expression of her doubts and fears. It is observed, regarding the Evangelists, in the several narratives, that each so continues and connects his own account, as if none of the particular circumstances supplied by the others were omitted. That St. Luke makes mention of the same announcement made to the Apostles, recorded by St. John, appears plain, from the words (xxiv. 24), "*And some of our people went to the sepulchre*," &c. Hence, more than Peter (verse 12) went, as St. John declares (xx. 3).

(e). Magdalen, according to St. John (xx. 2), announces the removal of the stone, and says nothing of the Angels. But, it can be answered in a *general* way, that each Evangelist does not relate all the circumstances. It may be also said, in a special way, that, as the three other Evangelists agree in stating that Mary Magdalen and the women saw the Angels at their first approach, we must take their united and uniform testimony as clearly proving the fact. Then, most likely, St. John, out of anxiety to prove the resurrection, from his own testimony, and that of St. Peter, who went with him to the tomb, passes over the occurrences prior to this, relating to the vision of the Angels, and thus inverts the order in which things occurred. He mentions the apparition of the Angels, in the second place (xx. 12).—Maldonatus.

St. Luke says (xxiv. 9), the women mentioned to the eleven all that occurred. But, this might apply to the other Apostles, after Peter and John left for the sepulchre.

4. "*And for fear of Him the guards were struck with terror.*" Not a fear of human punishment, which the absence of our Lord's body might entail; but, a sudden panic, with which they were preternaturally struck at the presence of the Angel—a fear, lest lightning from heaven might consume them; or, the earth swallow them.

"*And became like dead men,*" owing to the paleness of their countenances, and the stupor which seized on them, not, however to the extent of rendering them perfectly senseless; for, God had providentially so arranged, that they were capable of giving testimony in proof of our Lord's resurrection (v. 11).

5. "*Answering,*" by a Hebrew usage, signifies, *commencing to speak*. "*Said to the women,*" Magdalen among the rest; for, she was present, though this is denied by some. "*Fear not you,*" as if to say: Let the guards and enemies of our Lord fear, who put Him to a cruel death, and endeavour still to impede the glory of His resurrection. As for *you*, who have come on an errand of charity and devout affection, there is no ground for fear, but rather for joy. "*For I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified.*" I am fully aware of your object in coming here; you are engaged in the service of Him of whom I am but the minister. "*Crucified,*" to convey, that from the Cross of Christ have flown all blessings, salvation to men, glory to God, and perseverance to the Angels. St. Mark adds, "*Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified*" (xvi. 6).

6. "*He is not here*"—not, that He is taken away; but, rather by His own omnipotent power—"He is risen, as He said." He has fully verified His promise of rising on the third day, and thus furnished the most undoubted grounds for your faith, so that if you believe not me, believe His own sacred words, whom you have followed as a great Prophet, incapable of deceiving or telling you a lie. "*Come,*" have a proof of it yourselves, enter the monument, "*and see the place where the Lord was laid,*" the common Lord of all, Angels and men; no other than the everlasting God Himself.

St. Luke quotes different words, as spoken by the Angels: "*Why seek you the living among the dead?*" (xxiv. 5). St. John: "*Woman, why weepest thou?*" (xx. 13). All the words recorded by the Evangelists were spoken by the Angels. First, the women, on approaching and seeing the stone removed, began to weep—Magdalen alone is said to have wept. "*Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping*" (John xx. 11). But although the others also wept; still, she alone is mentioned as being the chief among them. Next, entering the sepulchre, the Angels said to them, "*Why weep ye?*" Then, Magdalen answering on behalf of all, said, "*Because they have taken away my Lord,*" &c. (xx. 13). Then, the Angel speaking for himself and the other Angel, said, "*Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified*" (Mark xvi. 6). "*Why seek you the living among the dead?*" (Luke xxiv. 5), as if rebuking them for their want of faith. "*He is risen; He is not here;*" and then he ordered them to announce the joyous tidings to the disciples (as in following verse).

7. "*Going quickly, tell His disciples*"—who are now sorrowing for the death of their Master, the joyous news—"that He is risen." St. Mark adds (xvi. 7), "*and Peter,*" to show his singular regard for him who was at all times most ardent in his

love for his Master ; whom He made the head of His Church, His own vicar on earth. He probably wished to encourage Peter, lest a recollection of his fall might cause him to hesitate about coming with the rest (St. Gregory.)

"*And behold He will go before you,*" &c. The Greek (*προαγει*), is in the present tense : "*He goeth before you.*" But the present tense here has a future signification, *He will go*. It might also mean, He is *resolved, prepared*, to go before you ; and no matter what haste you may make, He shall be *before you*, as in virtue of the glorious gift of *subtilty*, His glorified body would be transported there in an instant. "*There you shall see Him.*" No doubt, our Blessed Lord had manifested Himself to the women and disciples in Jerusalem and at Emmaus ; but He did so in a transient and *private* way, to confirm their wavering faith. It was only in Galilee where He had most followers, having performed there most of His wonders, and devoted most of His time to preaching, and where His followers would be farthest away from those that would molest them, that He was determined to manifest Himself publicly to His assembled Apostles, and to great numbers at once (1 Cor. xv. 6). It was there He conversed familiarly with them for forty days, and "*showed Himself alive after His Passion, by many proofs, for forty days appearing to them, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God*" (Acts i. 3). In Judea, where He had been often persecuted, and where His disciples could not well assemble, from fear of the Jews, He did not show Himself in this public manner.

"*There you shall see Him.*" The women, too, are not excluded from the privilege of seeing Him in Galilee.

"*Lo, I have foretold it to you,*" as if to say, when it shall have come to pass, you will derive fresh grounds of belief from the fact of My having told you of it beforehand ; or, as if he said, I have now discharged my office, by announcing to you, on the part of God, what is to happen. St. Mark has (xvi. 7), "*as he told you,*" as if the Angel was only quoting our Lord's own prediction and promise on the subject, in order to gain credit for his words.

(For Moral Reflections, see Mark xvi. 6.)

TEXT.

8. *And they went out quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, running to tell his disciples.*

9. *And behold Jesus met them, saying : Ail hail. But they came up and took hold of his feet, and adored him.*

10. *Then Jesus said to them : Fear not. Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see me.*

COMMENTARY.

8. "*With fear,*" or rather, *awe*, produced by the appearance of the Angels at the sepulchre, and the announcement of the resurrection of their Lord, and anxiety lest these things might be spectral appearances, rather than realities. "*And great joy,*" caused by the joyous tidings they heard. They felt mingled sensations of awe and joy.

"*Running to tell His disciples,*" viz., "*to the eleven, and to all the rest*" (Luke xxiv. 9). What they announced to the eleven, St. Matthew does not say, but St. Luke tells us, "*they told all these things,*" viz., the apparition of the Angels, and the taking away of our Lord's body (John xx. 2).

The apparent discrepancy between the account of what the women announced, as recorded in St. Luke (xxiv.), and St. John (xx. 2), is easily cleared up. The women

being timid, and in doubt whether the whole thing was a reality or not, said nothing of it on their way back (Mark xvi. 8), and when they reached the Apostles, they informed them alternately of what they saw and heard, and of their own doubts and fears on the subject, which made them imagine our Lord's body was taken away. This latter point, regarding their doubts, is recorded by St. John only (xx. 2), and omitted by the other Evangelists. The Apostles, too, in the first instance, regarded the women's account "*as an idle tale, and they did not believe them*" (Luke xxiv. 11).

Here, we must insert what is described by St. John (xx. 2-19), in order to fill up the Gospel narrative, and remove the apparent discrepancies in the narratives of the Evangelists. Magdalen and her companions, in obedience to the Angels injunctions, hasten to Jerusalem from the sepulchre, to announce to the Apostles what they saw and heard (Luke xxiv. 9). While doing this, they give expression to their own fears and doubts (John xx. 2). (Some expositors hold that at her *first* visit Magdalen did not wait for the vision of Angels seen by the other women, she at once, on seeing the stone removed, hastened back to tell the Apostles. This opinion is not easily reconciled with Luke xxiv. 9, 10.) Immediately, Peter and John hasten to the sepulchre, followed by Magdalen and her companions. Peter and John enter the sepulchre, and return home, wondering at what they saw. The companions of Magdalen also return, leaving Magdalen behind them, weeping from fear, and a desire to find the body of our Lord. While stooping down and looking into the sepulchre, she saw two Angels, who were exhibiting reverence to our Lord, who was standing behind Magdalen. On looking behind her, to see who it was that the Angels were reverencing, she saw our Lord, and mistook Him for the gardener in charge of the garden where the sepulchre was. But immediately after recognizing Him, from His usual tone of voice, when pronouncing her name, she would lay hold of His feet (verse 9), which in Scripture denotes a species of adoration; but this He would not allow. Magdalen was, then, the first to whom, according to the Gospel History, our Lord showed Himself after His resurrection (Mark xvi. 9). She merited this favour by her love and affection, owing to which she clung to the sepulchre where His sacred body had been deposited. After this, overtaking the other women on their way (verse 9), she had the privilege of seeing Him a second time, in company with these others. It is supposed by many, as a matter of congruity—although the Gospel makes no mention of it—that He appeared first of all to His Blessed Mother, on the day of His resurrection.

9. "*And Jesus met them saying,*" &c. This occurred on their second return from the sepulchre, after the Apostles had left, Mary Magdalen remaining alone after them at the tomb. That it could not refer to the first time they ran back in haste to inform the Apostles of what they saw and heard, expressing at the same time their anxious doubts about His sacred body, appears clear from the fact, that from SS. Mark and John, it is certain that our Lord appeared to Magdalen first, early on the morning of His resurrection, and that at the tomb, not on the road. Moreover, the women said nothing of our Lord appearing to them, when first they announced these things to the Apostles (John xx. 2; Luke xxiv. 9, &c. 23, 24). It was on their return, after the Apostles had examined the tomb, that this apparition occurred to the women, and to Mary Magdalen, who had overtaken them, after having seen Him already alone at the sepulchre.

Maldonatus, quoting the authority of St. Athanasius, holds, that the apparition referred to is the same as that in Mark (xvi. 9; John xx. 16), which was made to Magdalen only; and that Magdalen alone is mentioned by St. Mark as having been

first favoured with the apparition of our Lord, not in opposition to the other women, but to the Apostles; or, that she was the first among them who saw Him, and to her alone did He speak; and that she is spoken of alone out of the rest, because she was the most prominent among them for her love and deep affection for Him.

"*All hail*"—*χαίρετε*—is a common Hebrew form of salutation, expressive of peace, and embracing all blessings. It means, *rejoice* at the glad event, which has thrown open the gates of heaven, after the triumph over death and hell, and has reversed the malediction entailed by the first woman. Hence, as death commenced with the female sex, it was congruous, that the message of the resurrection—the triumph over death—should be first announced to the same (St. Hilary).

"*They came up*," after recognizing Him, "*and took hold of His feet*," out of modesty and reverence; they decline embracing His person. Among the Jews, it was a kind of reverence and adoration, particularly on the part of women towards men, to touch their feet (Exod. iv. 25); also the case of the woman of Sunamis (4 Kings iv. 27; also Luke vii. 38; John xi. 32). The women here touch His feet, with the view of adoring Him, which is afterwards explained. "*And adored Him*." It is said, that He forbade Magdalen on the occasion of His first apparition (John xx. 17) to touch Him. Whether He did so here, and that the women, in the excess of their love, still touched Him, thinking they were doing Him honour, as in the case of the blind men in the Gospel, who proclaimed His goodness, notwithstanding His prohibition (ix. 30, 31), is not mentioned by the Evangelist. Neither does St. John say whether Magdalen touched Him or not. St. John tells us, He told Magdalen not to touch Him; whether she actually did so or not, he does not say. St. Matthew tells us here, that the other women actually took hold of His feet; whether they were prohibited from doing so or not, is not mentioned by him.

10. Whilst they were engaged in reverently and affectionately adoring their Lord with mingled feelings of awe and affection, "*Jesus said to them: Fear not*." The presence of spiritual and supernatural beings is calculated to inspire mortal man with awe and terror. Hence, the awe and fear which the women felt at the presence of their Lord risen from the tomb. Most likely, also, their fears arose from the apprehension, as in the case of the Angels, lest what they saw might be a phantom rather than a reality. Our Redeemer, addressing them, dispels their fears, from whatever cause proceeding, and tells them:

"*Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee*," &c. By "*His brethren*," are meant all His Apostles, including those who were nearly allied to Him by kindred. Our Redeemer is supposed here to allude to the words of the Psalm (xxi. 23), "*Narrabo nomen tuum fratribus meis*," quoted by St. Paul (Heb. ii. 12). During His mortal life, He called them His disciples and friends; now, risen glorious and immortal from the dead, He designates them by the tender and endearing appellation of "*brethren*," to assuage their grief for His death, strengthen their minds, and inspire them with confidence; to show, that, although He is now glorious, still He participates in the same human nature; and also to suggest to them, that while He is the natural Son of God, the first-born among many brethren, they are the adoptive sons of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs of Christ. He transmits the same message, that had been already given by the Angels (verse 7) to confirm the testimony of the Angels, and to show that His words and theirs perfectly agreed.

"*There they shall see Me*" (verse 7). He manifested Himself to them shortly after this in Jerusalem, but it was only in a passing, transient way: whereas, in Galilee

He remained many days, freely conversing with them on all matters pertaining to the future government of His Church, &c.

Our Redeemer manifested Himself several times in Judea. On the day of His resurrection, He showed Himself *five* different times—1st, to Magdalen (Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 16)—most probably, before all, He appeared to His Virgin Mother; 2nd, to the women (verse 9); 3rd, to Peter (Luke xxiv. 34); 4th, to the disciples going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 36); 5th, to the ten assembled disciples, after the return of the two from Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 36), Thomas being absent.

After the day of His resurrection, He appeared five other times before His ascension—1st. After eight days, when Thomas was present (John xx. 26). 2nd. When the seven disciples were fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (John xxi. 2). 3rd. To the eleven on a mountain of Galilee, generally supposed to be Tabor (Matt. xxviii. 16). Most likely, this is the apparition referred to by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6), where "*He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once.*" The Evangelist only makes mention of the eleven, who saw Him by appointment; he does not, however, say by how many more He was seen, on that occasion. 4th. He appeared to St. James (1 Cor. xv. 7); this is not mentioned in the Gospel. 5th. To all the Apostles and others, on Mount Olivet, at His Ascension (Acts i. 9). He appeared to St. Paul afterwards (Acts ix. 3; 1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8).

The apparition of our Lord at the Sea of Tiberias, is called by St. John (xxi. 14), the "*third*;" but, this probably means, the *third public* appearance, in an assembly of His disciples, or, it may refer to the number of the days He appeared. He appeared, first, on the day of His resurrection, to several persons; secondly, eight days afterwards; and then on a third day, referred to here by St. John.

TEXT.

11. *Who when they were departed, behold some of the guards came into the city, and told the chief priests all things that had been done.*

12. *And they being assembled, together with the ancients, taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers,*

13. *Saying: Say you, his disciples came by night, and stole him away when we were asleep.*

14. *And if the governor shall hear of this, we will persuade him, and secure you.*

15. *So they taking the money, did as they were taught: and this word was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day.*

COMMENTARY.

11. "*Now when they were departed.*" This, according to some (Jansenius, &c.) refers to the first departure of the women to announce to Peter and the Apostles the vision of Angels, the absence of the body, &c., although recorded after the *second* departure of the women, when the Apostles had returned home, on seeing the truth of the accounts given by the women.

"*Some of the guards came into the city,*" &c. These, most likely, proceeded in the name of the entire, to announce what they witnessed about the vision of Angels, the earthquake, &c. It is most likely, however, that it refers to the second return, or departure of the women after the Apostles had been at the tomb. It was only after the Apostles had departed, and the women followed them, that the terror which the soldiers conceived from the appearance of the Angels had left them, God so arranging it, that they were, as it were, kept spell-bound, during the entire time, so that they would not interfere with the Apostles, any more than they had done with the

women, on their first approach, at early dawn, and would be in a position to give unquestionable testimony regarding all the circumstances, which placed beyond doubt, the truth of the resurrection. It was when the women and the Apostles departed, and the terror of the soldiers was removed, that "*some of the guards*" went to announce all they saw to the Chief Priests, by whom they were appointed, with Pilate's sanction, to guard the sepulchre. "*Some of them*," but not *all*, as otherwise they would have violated the duty of watching the sepulchre till the end of the third day, the morning of which had then arrived. They "*told the Chief Priests all the things that had been done*," already narrated by the Evangelists, regarding the vision of Angels, the earthquake, the removal of the stone, the absence of the body, &c., all which, very likely, they themselves, before leaving, most closely examined and ascertained. This they did, for two reasons—1st, to render an account of their own duty, lest they might be accused of neglect, or perfidy, or corruption before the Governor; and, 2ndly, to give the Chief Priests, &c., an opportunity of devising by what means they could prevent the rumour, relative to the resurrection, from being circulated among the people.

12. "*Together with the ancients*." The Scribes also were there assembled, as one of the three orders which composed the Chief Council among the Jews. They adopted the wicked design of bribing the soldiers into falsehood. "*A great sum of money*," such a sum as would exceed that promised for guarding the sepulchre, and would tell on the avaricious minds of the soldiery. "*To the soldiers*," all the soldiers who were stationed at the tomb, were witnesses of the truth of the things related by those who came to the High Priests. These princes of the Jewish nation, persisting in their malice, refused to turn to God, and wished to persuade the world that Jesus was not risen; and sacrificed to the purposes of falsehood, the money given for the use of the temple. As they gave Judas thirty pieces of silver to betray his Master, so they now offer a large sum of money to suppress a truth so useful and so necessary for man (St. Jerome).

13. Nothing can more clearly demonstrate the blind and inexcusable perversity of the Jewish princes, than their conduct in reference to the soldiers; whose testimony was irrefragable, and beyond all suspicion; and, yet, far from yielding, they oppose the known truth, and wilfully endeavour to corrupt the minds of the soldiery, to testify to what they knew to be false. Moreover, they exhibit, in the clearest light, their own stupid folly. They prevail on the soldiers to testify to what, according to their own admission, they were in a condition to know nothing of. "*Testes dormientes adhibes?*" jeeringly exclaims St. Augustine, in a tone of merited scorn, "*vere tu ipse obdormisti, qui scrutando talia defecisti*," in Psalm lxiii. The whole story of the soldiers was most absurd, and carried with it its own refutation, and, in truth, furnished an additional argument of our Redeemer's resurrection. It shows the utter desperation the Jewish princes must have been reduced to, when they had recourse to so ridiculous a device. If the Priests themselves were not convinced of the fact, would they not, instead of bribing the soldiers to dissemble, have accused them before Pilate of a breach of military duty? It is preposterous to suppose, that weak, timid men, who dared not defend their Master, nay, who deserted Him while alive, would come, in defiance of an armed soldiery, to steal away His body, and remove the stone, which it required a good many hands to remove; and this with the foolish view of causelessly perpetuating an impudent fraud of which themselves would have been, in the supposition made, the deluded victims. Why not steal away

His body on Friday night, before the guards were set to watch it on Saturday? The mouth of the sepulchre was also sealed. Why not take away the clothes which St. Peter saw lying in the sepulchre, and avoid the delay of taking off His clothes and the napkin that bound His head? The removal of these clothes, particularly as they must have adhered to His body, which was anointed, would cause much delay and danger to themselves.

The story of the soldiers, so clumsily invented, only rendered the fact of the resurrection the more certain; for, it admitted the body was not in the tomb. Hence, the fears and doubts of the disciples, joined to the foolish story of the soldiers, demonstrate most clearly, that the whole affair of the stealing of the body was a clumsy, unmeaning invention. Moreover, how could it be possible that Roman soldiers would all have slept, when their lives were in danger? and even, had they slept, that they would not be roused by the noise which the removal of the stone must have caused? Avarice blinded the soldiers to give circulation to this absurd story, as it had blinded the unhappy Judas, "*avaritia illa quæ captivavit discipulum, comitem Christi, captivavit et militem custodem sepulchri*" (St. Augustine).

It is likely, the princes of the Jews persuaded them, that, although our Lord had risen, still it was to a spiritual mode of living; that He would no more appear in His natural form; and, hence, there was no fear of their story being contradicted by His future appearance among the people.

14. They promised them security, in case of any investigation as to their dereliction of duty. Most likely, the Governor who had shown such weakness in condemning Jesus, whom he knew to be innocent, would be easily prevailed upon by the same influences to pardon the soldiers, in case any question were raised on the subject. But, that the soldiers secretly told the entire truth to Pilate, and testified to the truth of our Lord's resurrection, and that Pilate informed Tiberius of the whole affair, who, therefore, wished to have Christ enrolled among the gods, is expressly stated by Hegesippus, in *Anaceph.* It is also stated by Tertullian (in *Apologet.* c. 5), and by Eusebius (in *Chronico A. Christi.* 38, *Histor. Liber.* ii., c. 2), that Pilate informed Tiberius of the matter, who threatened the accusers of the Christians with death, although, by a decree of the Fathers, it was fixed that the Christians should be driven from the city.

15. The soldiers, taking the money, did as the High Priests told them, viz., they declared that the body was stolen while they were asleep.

"*And this word,*" this ridiculous story about the stealing of the body of our Lord by His disciples, while the guard were asleep, which was put into the mouths of the soldiers, "*was spread abroad among the Jews,*" believed by most of them. He opposes "*the Jews,*" the unbelieving mass of the Jewish people, to the Christians converted from Judaism, and who were comparatively few. "*Even unto this day,*" nearly eight years after our Lord's resurrection, when St. Matthew's Gospel was written. The Jews, blinded by their passions, continued still in their obstinacy. Having refused to acknowledge the Divinity of our Lord, they denied the truth of His resurrection; and this blindness and hardness of heart shall continue among that accursed race, until the end of the world, when, according to the general belief, the veil shall be removed from their eyes, and the remnant of Israel shall be saved—" *There shall come out of Sion He that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*" (Rom. xi. 26).

Others, by "*this word,*" understand, not the foolish tale regarding the stealing of

our Lord's body, but, the rumour about the bribing of the soldiers with money, to induce them to tell a lie regarding the stealing of our Redeemer's body (Maldonatus).

TEXT.

16. *And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*

17. *And seeing him they adored : but some doubted.*

18. *And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying : All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.*

19. *Going therefore teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

20. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*

COMMENTARY.

16. *And the eleven disciples,*" that is, Apostles, who were His chief disciples. He says, "*the eleven,*" since the *twelfth*, Judas, having already flung down to the Chief Priests the price of his treason, in despair, hanged himself (xxvii. 5).

"*Went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*" This apparition to the Apostles in Galilee did not take place till at least eight days after Easter day, as St. Augustine shows from the history of the Gospel (Lib. 3 de Consen. Evang., c. 25), and is clear from John (xx. 26, &c.) St. Matthew makes no mention of what occurred to the Apostles at Jerusalem, during the eight days following Easter day.

It is not mentioned by any of the Evangelists, when or where "*Jesus had appointed*" to meet His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. Probably, it was in one of His previous apparitions. Neither is it said, what the mountain is. It is quite certain it was not the mountain from which He ascended, as this was in Judea, near Jerusalem (Acts i. 12). Hence, it is commonly supposed to be Thabor, which St. Peter, from the several manifestations and operations of our Lord that occurred there, calls, "*the holy mount*" (2 Pet. i. 18). It is commonly supposed, that this was the remarkable apparition referred to by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6), when our Lord appeared to "*more than five hundred brethren at once.*" Probably, our Lord instructed His Apostles to gather together His followers in Galilee, to enjoy His presence on this occasion ; although this is not mentioned by the Evangelists, any more than is His appointment regarding the mountain. St. Matthew makes no mention of any other apparition of our Lord to His disciples. This He mentions as being the most remarkable of all.

17. "*And seeing Him they adored,*" prostrated themselves before Him, confessing Him to be the eternal Son of God, now risen triumphant from the tomb. "*But, some doubted.*" There is a diversity of opinion as to the meaning of these words. It is not easy to see how, on this occasion, any of the Apostles doubted our Redeemer's resurrection ; for, even Thomas had already been convinced of it (John xx. 28). Hence, many expositors refer the word, "*doubted,*" not to this occasion of His appearing on the mount ; but, to the former occasion, when Thomas and, probably, others had entertained doubts when at Jerusalem ; hence, they interpret the words to mean, "*but some HAD doubted,*" as if the words meant : They all now openly confess Him to be God, and adore Him, although heretofore, on some occasions, some of them *had* doubted (but now doubted no longer) the truth of His resurrection. And, as St. Matthew mentioned this as the first and only apparition of our Lord to His disciples, he probably, recorded, at the same time, what occurred at some of His

preceding apparitions, viz., the doubts entertained by some of His Apostles regarding the reality of His resurrection. Others, who refer the words, "*some doubted*," to the present occasion, understand them of some of the other disciples, and the five hundred followers of our Lord. It may also mean, that among the Apostles themselves, some doubted on this occasion, not the truth of His resurrection; but the reality or identity of His person, whether He was the Lord who had truly risen, just as the Apostles, seeing Him walk upon the sea, doubted if it were He, and not rather a ghost. Hence, our Redeemer, in order to dissipate their doubts—

18. "*Coming*" nearer, "*spoke to them*," addressed them familiarly in His usual, well-known tone of voice, in order to remove every feeling of doubt and uneasiness. Many things were spoken by our Lord to His Apostles, during the forty days' interval between His Resurrection and Ascension, respecting the future government of His Church—"speaking of the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3). But St. Matthew records, out of the many things He treated of, only those which it was most important for us to know, and, particularly, the precept and power given to the Apostles to preach the Gospel to the entire earth, which was the summary of all He then said. In order, however, to inspire them with greater confidence in undertaking a work so arduous, and, humanly speaking (taking into account their former character and position, together with the perversity and intellectual powers of the world) to them impossible, He refers to the plenitude of power given Him in heaven and on earth, from which fulness of power their commission was derived.

"*All power is given to Me in heaven*," &c. As *God*, He had all power from eternity; as *man*, He had, from His Incarnation, in virtue of the hypostatic union of the Divine Person with human nature, received all power, or, the power of excellence, as it is called. Besides, all power was given Him in a more eminent degree, which He merited by a special title, through His Passion and Cross, His humiliation and sufferings. While He might have referred to this triple power, it is to the latter He, most likely, refers here in particular. He merited, by His humiliations, to be exalted (Phil. ii. 8, 9).

His humanity, after His resurrection, being endowed with immortality, became, in a new form, sharer of the Divine glory and power; and, having despoiled the devil of his usurped dominion, obtained full power over the entire redeemed human race. It is, then, because He died and rose again triumphant from the tomb, that "*all power was given to Him*," by His Father, "*in heaven*," placing Him at His right hand, and proclaiming Him as the King of Angels; "*and in earth*," to establish His Church, and gather her from all nations, to unite in one body all His members, and reign supremely over all creation. This universal dominion of Christ is referred to (Dan. vii. 14; Eph. i. 20, &c.; Phil. ii. 10, &c.; Acts x. 36, 42).

"*All power*," means, perfect, absolute, full, unrestricted dominion "*in heaven and earth*" (Apoc. xvii. 14), that is, over all creatures, both in heaven and earth. As He had been humbled beneath all creatures; so, now, He is exalted beyond them all, and receives "*all power*," that is, dominion and right to govern them.

19. "*Going, therefore*," since all power is given to Me, and, "*therefore*," I have full authority to send you. Hence, as I am about to leave this world, and return to My Father, I send you, as I have a right to do, as My legates and visible representatives, to exercise power in My behalf.

"*Teach all nations*," without distinction of Jew or Gentile. St. Mark (xvi. 15) says, "*going into the entire world*." What are they commissioned "*to teach all*

nations?" St. Mark tells us, "*preach the Gospel to every creature,*" the tidings of salvation through Christ, the Gospel in which is contained "*the science of salvation*" (Luke i. 77), a knowledge of the necessary truths of faith, relative to the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, remission of sins, &c. This is unlike His former mandate addressed to His Apostles, when they were first sent to the lost ones of the house of Israel—"in *viam gentium ne abieritis.*" The former mandate is now withdrawn; and He now tells them not to confine their ministrations to the narrow precincts of Judea; but, as He has ransomed the entire world, and received all nations as His inheritance, they were to instruct all nations, without exception or distinction, in the necessary truths of faith.

"*Baptizing them in the name of the Father,*" &c. After having instructed mankind, including Jew and Gentile, in the Faith, the Apostles were next to "*baptize them.*" Those whom you shall have *discipled* (which is the force of the Greek word, μαθητευσατε), and who shall have embraced My faith, you will next "*baptize.*" The necessity of baptism, as also its matter, had been already clearly expressed by our Redeemer (John iii. 5). Although the *matter* of baptism is not clearly expressed here, the Church has, from the beginning, declared it to be *natural water*, and condemned all such as held the contrary, *v.g.*, Hermias, &c., who held, that as the baptism of John was in water, and Christ's "*in the Holy Ghost and in fire,*" Christian baptism was not to be administered in water. Baptism was instituted by our Redeemer in place of circumcision, as a sign for distinguishing and recognizing His followers, and as a proof of their incorporation with the body of His Church. It was, however, not a mere barren sign, but a sign operative of grace, cleansing from sin, and conferring the Holy Ghost. "*He saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost*" (Titus iii. 5).

"*In the name of the Father,*" &c. The form of baptism is here assigned, which consists in the express invocation of the three Persons of the adorable Trinity, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Hence, the Church has, at all times, taught, that the essential form of baptism requires, besides expressing the act of baptizing, "*Ego te baptizo*" (or, *baptizetur servus Christi*, which latter form—allowed only in the Greek Church—was declared valid by Eugene IV., *ad Armenos*), the express and distinct invocation of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. And, although, according to some, this might not, strictly speaking, be proved from these words; still, the Apostles understood the words in this sense, and transmitted it so to the Church, which, from tradition, has pronounced the distinct invocation of the Trinity to be essential, and condemned all who asserted the contrary, such as the Marcionites and Priscillianists, whose baptism was condemned in the Council of Nice, because they did not employ the above form. The words, "*in the name,*" besides expressing the invocation of the name of the Blessed Trinity, expresses, also, invoking the virtue, power, Divinity of the Trinity, from which baptism derives all its efficacy. It was usual with the Jews to baptize, in their own form, all who were converted from the worship of false gods. Even with Pagan nations, it was customary to wash the entire bodies of such as wished to be initiated into their religious rites. Our Redeemer wished that no one should be introduced into His Church, unless, after profession of faith, through the mystical laver, whereby they are regenerated into spiritual life, and adopted into the Sonship of God. In the word, "*name*" (not, *names*), is expressed the *unity of nature*—*nomen Trinitatis unus Deus* (St. Jerome); and the distinct terms, "*of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,*" separated by the copulative conjunction, express the *Trinity of Persons* in God. In a word, they express the adorable mystery of the Unity and Trinity of God, the foundation of Christian faith.

St. Mark (xvi. 15,) expresses this commission in almost similar words. "*Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*" The "*whole world*," embraces "*all nations*," the Jews included; "*every creature*," embraces all rational beings who were capable of profiting of the preaching of the Gospel. "*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but, he that believeth not, shall be condemned.*" The promise and threat contained in these words, involve a precept to confer and receive baptism. Hence, they are similar to the words of St. Matthew, "*baptizing them in the name of the Father*," &c. The error of the Anabaptists, founded on the words, "*he that believeth*," &c., is refuted by the universal practice and tradition of the Church conferring infant baptism. St. Augustine also refutes this error by saying, that infants do profess their faith through the sponsors and the Church, so that those who have sinned by the perverse will and act of another (viz., Adam), also believe they are justified and saved through the will and acts of others, viz., the Church and their sponsors. At all events, it is quite clear, the words here only regard adults; to them alone could the Gospel be preached. To them alone, could the words, "*believe not*," which refers to positive rejection of the Gospel after it was preached to them, apply. From other sources, viz., tradition and the practice of the Church from the beginning, is derived a certain argument in favour of infant baptism.

The argument derived from this passage, in favour of the sufficiency of faith alone, is hardly worth noticing. The form, "*he who believes*," &c., like every other affirmative proposition, always implies, provided there be no other obstacle; provided everything else be fulfilled. He speaks of faith, animated by charity and good works. Thus, *v.g.*, we read, "*he who shall invoke the name of the Lord, shall be saved*," which means: provided he do everything else required. For, we read elsewhere, "*Not every one who says, Lord, Lord*," &c. (vii. 21.) Moreover, in these very words, more than faith is required, "*he that believes and is baptized*." And in the words of St. Matthew, "*Teaching them to observe*," &c., it is conveyed, that the observance of God's Commandments is no less necessary for salvation than is faith.

20. "*Teaching them to observe*," &c. This refers to the practical precepts and commandments which they should "*observe*," by the performance of good works, after receiving faith and baptism. Besides faith, the observance of the Commandments, and the assiduous persevering practice of virtue, are indispensable for salvation.

Our Redeemer enjoins three things on His Apostles, intimately connected with one another, which they should perform on their mission, as His vicegerents throughout the whole world—1st. Preaching the doctrines of faith, "*TEACH all nations*." The Greek word for "*teach*" (*μαθητευσατε*), is clearly expressive of dogmatic teaching. Hence, for it, St. Mark has, "*PREACH the Gospel*." 2nd. The conferring of baptism, to introduce the nations into His Church. 3rd. The inculcation of a practical observance of His Commandments, and of the precepts of a holy life, "*teaching them to observe*," &c. The Greek word for "*teaching*" (*διδασκοντες*), is well suited to express moral teaching.

Before baptism, they were to be instructed in what appertains to Christian faith; after it, in those things which appertain to morals and a holy Christian life, manifested by good works.

"*And behold, I am with you*," &c. This glorious and magnificent promise, so consoling to all the children of the Church, was very opportunely subjoined by our Redeemer to the preceding command given to the Apostles to preach the Gospel to

the nations of the earth. He enjoined on them a most arduous work, humanly speaking, impossible of accomplishment, considering, on the one hand, the position and character of the Apostles—weak, humble, illiterate, ignorant fishermen; and on the other, the intellectual pride and power of the world—the nature of the doctrines they were to propound, their opposition to the hitherto received maxims of the world, and their opposition to the corrupt and cherished passions of mankind. He was sending them, as lambs to conquer wolves. He was, moreover, Himself shortly to withdraw from them, and return in triumph to His Father. Any wonder, then, that they should be dispirited and desponding at the arduous work of converting the world, which lay before them? But, our Redeemer, at once, dispels all grounds for despondency. He tells them, that He will protect, assist, and strengthen them, as He had hitherto done, and promises that His never failing assistance, while they are engaged in His sacred work, shall be ready at hand when needed.

"And behold." Ever bear in mind, what I am about communicating to you. It is this: *"I am with you."* *"I"*—"to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth"—*I*, the Omnipotent God, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father—the Word, from the beginning, by whom all things were made; *I*—who *"have conquered the world"*—"in whom the prince of the world has nothing—to whom My Father has promised to place all My enemies as a footstool under My feet—in whom all the fulness of the Divinity dwelleth corporally"—*I*, the Infallible Truth, who shall ever perform My promises. *"Am,"* unchangeably, unceasingly. (The present tense, *"am,"* is employed to convey His Immutability. It embraces all times, the future no less than the present.)

"With you," not merely by My Omnipresence, as I am with all creation; not merely by the ordinary assistance of My grace, which is given to all men rightly disposed; but, in a singular way, granting you a special, extraordinary assistance, aiding assisting, protecting, guarding you from error or failure; so that you shall securely and infallibly succeed, as My representatives, in the heavenly work of preaching to the nations of the earth, converting them to My faith and Church.

"All days," without a moment's intermission, interruption, or interval. That this was the kind of assistance promised, is clear from the importance of the mission here confided to them—from the solemn manner in which our Redeemer previously invokes and appeals to the Divine and Supreme Power conferred on Him—also, from the form, *"I am with you,"* which implies, something singular and uncommon (Murray, de Ecclesia). It may also include, though not directly intended here, His abiding presence in the adorable Eucharist.

"Even to the consummation of the world." Thus *"showing,"* as St. Jerome expresses it, *"that they would always live (in their successors), and that He would never depart from the faithful."* *"Qui usque ad consummationem sæculi se cum discipulis, futurum esse promittit et illos ostendit semper, esse victuros et se nunquam a credentibus recessurum"* (St. Jerome).

That the words, *"consummation of the world,"* mean the end of time, and not the end of the age of the Apostles, or first age of the Christian era, as some Protestants pretend, is clear from this, that the assistance here promised is given for the mission of converting, baptizing, and teaching. The mission referred to and the assistance promised, are inseparably united, and connected with one another, *"Go, teach,"* &c., *"And behold, I am,"* &c. The words clearly show, that the assistance promised, was to ever accompany the work of the mission prescribed, and to cease only with its termination. Now, the mission of converting, &c., has not ceased with the Apostles, but, is to last in full force to the end of time. Hence, also, the assistance

promised, is to continue in the Church till the end of ages. Moreover, it was promised for the conversion of "*all nations*."

And hence, as this work of universal conversion could not be performed by the Apostles themselves in person, both it and the assistance annexed to it, were to continue in their successors, to the end of time.

From this text, is proved the indefectibility of the Church to the end of ages. 2ndly. Her unfailing sanctity, "*robiscum sum*." 3rdly. Her Catholicity, embracing "*all nations*," which the efficacious promise of our Redeemer conveys. 4thly. Her Apostolicity. 5thly. Her Infallibility.

Similar is the promise, "*And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever*" (John xiv. 16). "*But when He, the Spirit of truth, shall come, He will teach you all truth*" (John xvi. 13). Christ's remaining with His Church, being with them all days to the end of time, is the same as the Holy Ghost remaining. For, such assistance and permanent continuance with the Church, being an *actus ad extra*, are, like all operations, *ad extra*, ascribed to one Person, common to the two other Persons of the adorable Trinity.

THE
HOLY GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST,
ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

PREFACE

ST. MARK, the writer of this Gospel, is generally supposed to have been of Jewish extraction. From the style of his writings, abounding in Hebraisms, he would seem to be better versed in the Hebrew than in the Greek language. It is said by some, among the rest by St. Epiphanius (Hæresi 51), that he was one of the seventy-two disciples of our Lord, and among those who deserted Him, in consequence of being scandalized at His doctrine on the subject of the adorable Eucharist (John vi. 66). These also add, that he was again converted and brought back by St. Peter. The more commonly received opinion, however, is, that he never heard our Lord in the flesh; and had never been amongst His followers; that it was only after our Lord's resurrection he embraced the faith for the first time, having been converted by the preaching of the Apostles, particularly of St. Peter, whose disciple and interpreter he became; that it was to him St. Peter refers (1 Ep. v. 13), when he speaks of his "*son Mark*," having begotten him in the faith (Papias, apud Eusebium, Lib. iii.; Hist. St. Augustine de Consen. Evangel., Lib. 1, c. 1).

He accompanied St. Peter on his journey to Rome, and we learn from the testimony of the ancients, that he wrote his Gospel at the urgent request of the faithful of Rome, who were anxious to have an enduring record of what the Prince of the Apostles taught them with such unction, by word of mouth (Clement Alexand., apud Eusebium, Lib. ii. c. 15; Epiphanius, Hæresi 51; Greg. Naz., Carmine 34; St. Jerome, Catalogo, &c., c. 8).

St. Peter sent several of his disciples to found Churches in different provinces. He sent St. Mark to preach the Gospel at Alexandria (then reputed the second city in the world next to Rome, and afterwards, the second See in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy), and in the surrounding countries, embracing Egypt, Thebais, Lybia. He preached there his written Gospel which he carried with him from Rome, and having founded the Church of Alexandria, and others in Egypt and the surrounding countries, he received the crown of martyrdom (Council of Rome under Gelasius, Tom. iv.), about the year 68 of our Lord, 14th of Nero, three years after the death of Saints Peter and Paul.

Some writers confound our Evangelist with John Mark, the kinsman of Barnabas (Col. iv. 10), of whom there is mention in the Acts of the Apostles (xii. 12-25; xiii. 13; xv. 37). St. Jerome (in Ep. ad Philemon), Victor of Antioch (Pref. in Marcum), &c. Our Evangelist is, however, supposed to be a different person altogether. For, John Mark had been with St. Paul at Rome about the year 62—the date of the Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, in which Epistles St. Paul refers to him; and it is generally held, that the Evangelist had not been then at

Rome, having left for Alexandria about the year 60. Nor have we any record of John Mark having ever become the disciple and interpreter of St. Peter, as the ancients testify regarding Mark the Evangelist (Clemens Alexan., *Lib. vi. Stromat.*, Irenæus, *Lib. iii.*; Origen, *apud Eusebium*, *Lib. vi. c. 25*; St. Jerome, in *Catalogo*, c. 8).

HIS GOSPEL, OCCASION OF.—We are informed by Clement of Alexandria (Eusebius, *Lib. ii. c. 15*); St. Epiphanius (*Hæres. 51*); St. Gregory Naz. (*Carmines 34*); St. Jerome (in *Catalogo*, c. 8), that it was at the earnest request of the faithful of Rome, St. Mark, the disciple of St. Peter, committed to writing what the latter delivered to them by word of mouth. As St. Mark never heard our Lord, he does not exactly follow the order of events in his narrative. He follows the order in which he heard them from St. Peter, who adapted his discourses to the utility and requirements of his hearers, without attending exactly to the order of the discourses or actions of our Divine Lord (Papias). St. Mark, however, took care to write nothing except what was strictly true, and as he heard it from the lips of his master. He committed all to writing under the inspiration and impulse of the Holy Ghost (*Epiphan. Hæres. 51, n. 6*).

St. Peter, overjoyed at the edifying zeal of the faithful for the word of truth, confirmed by his authority the Gospel of St. Mark, and authorized the reading of it in the Churches. We are informed by Tertullian (*Lib. iv. contra Marcion*), St. Jerome (in *Catalogo*, c. 8), that this Gospel was attributed to St. Peter himself, seemingly because it contained what he preached, or rather, perhaps, because it was ushered into light by one of his disciples.

In the Synopsis of Scripture bearing the name of Athanasius (*Synopsi, Tom. ii., op. Athanas., p. 202*), we are informed that it was St. Peter himself dictated it. It is given as a great proof of the humility of the Prince of the Apostles, that his disciple, who wrote under his own eye, and perhaps at his dictation, fully records everything tending to his humiliation, such as his denial of his Divine Master; and omits everything tending to exalt him.

LANGUAGE OF.—It is the common opinion, that it was written in Greek, which was in general use in Rome at the time; as we are informed by Juvenal (*Satire 5*); Cicero (*pro Archia*); Martial (*Epilog. 6-8*). It is said by some, that the original autograph of St. Mark, written in Latin, is preserved in St. Mark's Library at Venice. But the MS. in question, which is hardly legible, is referred by critics to a later date. We are informed by St. Jerome (*Prefat. in Evangel. ad Damasum*), that he corrected the Vulgate of the New Testament, the Gospel of St. Mark included, according to the most approved Greek copies, from a conviction that the original of St. Mark was Greek, and not Latin.

WHEN WRITTEN AND WHERE.—Papias, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius (*apud Eusebium, Lib. ii. c. 15*); St. Jerome (*Catalogo*, c. 8); Epiphanius (*Hæres. 51, n. 6*), with a host of ancient writers, tell us, that St. Mark wrote his Gospel during the lifetime of St. Peter. Irenæus (if the passage quoted from him on the subject be authentic), is the only one of the Fathers who says, that the Evangelist wrote it after the departure of Saints Peter and Paul. The precise year in which it was written is uncertain. It is generally supposed, that St. Mark left Rome for Egypt in the year 60; that he wrote the Gospel at Rome some time before that, about the year 57, three after his arrival at Rome with St. Peter.

St. Augustine calls St. Mark an abbreviator of St. Matthew (*de Consen. Evangel. c. 2*). Hence, some critics suppose the Gospel of St. Mark to be only an abbreviation of that of St. Matthew, because he details the same facts, and in almost the same terms employed by St. Matthew. But, this hypothesis is commonly rejected. For,

the description of certain events and of their circumstances in St. Mark, is quite different from that found in St. Matthew. Take, for instance, our Lord's temptation, regarding which, he says, our Lord "*was with the beasts*," which St. Matthew omits. He also records two or three miracles of which St. Matthew makes no mention whatever (Mark i. 23; viii. 22; ix. 16). He is more circumstantial than St. Matthew is, in his description of the decollation of the Baptist (c. vi.), and of the cure of the paralytic, and of the raising of the Ruler's daughter. He also describes the offering of the poor widow's mites (xii. 42), and the apparition of our Lord to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, of which St. Matthew makes no mention whatever. On the other hand, he omits alluding to important matters recorded by St. Matthew, regarding our Lord's human generation and infancy, or to His discourses and parables, so fully described by St. Matthew. It is clear, therefore, he could not be regarded as a mere abbreviator of St. Matthew.

The chief object which St. Mark had in view in writing his Gospel, would seem to be to show, that our Blessed Redeemer was Sovereign Lord of all things, since in almost every chapter, he furnishes proof of His Sovereign power, in the wonderful works he describes.

The question regarding the authenticity of the last eleven verses of chap. xvi., from v. 9 to the end, shall be explained in the Commentary on that chapter.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS.

The Evangelist commences his Gospel with the preaching of St. John the Baptist, which was in accordance with the predictions of the ancient Prophets (1-8). He next describes the Baptism of our Lord; the descent of the Holy Ghost on Him; His temptation by the devil; His preaching after the imprisonment of the Baptist (9-15). The call of Simon and Andrew, John and James (16-20). His preaching in the Synagogue, where He miraculously cured a man possessed by an unclean spirit (21-28). The cure of Peter's mother-in-law and of several others, some of them possessed by wicked spirits (29-35). The cure of the leper (36-45).

TEXT.

THE beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

2. *As it is written in Isaias the prophet: "Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee.*

3. *A voice of one crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."*

4. *John was in the desert baptizing, and preaching the baptism of penance unto the remission of sins.*

5. *And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem, and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.*

6. *And John was clothed with camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and he ate locusts and wild honey.*

7. *And he preached saying: There cometh after me one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.*

8. *I have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*

9. *And it came to pass, in those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee; and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*

10. *And forthwith coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit as a dove descending, and remaining on him.*

11. *And there came a voice from heaven: Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.*
12. *And immediately the Spirit drove him out into the desert.*
13. *And he was in the desert forty days, and forty nights: and was tempted by satan, and he was with beasts, and the angels ministered to him.*
14. *And after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God.*
15. *And saying: The time is accomplished, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the Gospel.*
16. *And passing by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother, casting nets into the sea (for they were fishermen).*
17. *And Jesus said to them: Come after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.*
18. *And immediately leaving their nets, they followed him.*
19. *And going on from thence a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were mending their nets in the ship:*
20. *And forthwith he called them. And leaving their father Zebedee in the ship with his hired men, they followed him.*
21. *And they entered into Capharnaum, and forthwith upon the Sabbath-days going into the synagogue, he taught them.*
22. *And they were astonished at his doctrine. For he was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes.*
23. *And there was in their synagogue, a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,*
24. *Saying: What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know who thou art, the Holy one of God.*
25. *And Jesus threatened him, saying: Speak no more and go out of the man.*
26. *And the unclean spirit tearing him, and crying out with a loud voice, went out of him.*
27. *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying: What thing is this? what is this new doctrine? for with power he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.*
28. *And the fame of him was spread forthwith into all the country of Galilee*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*The beginning of the Gospel*," &c. The words mean: The joyous tidings of salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, began, in accordance with the predictions of the prophets, and of Isaiah in particular (vv. 2, 3), with the ministry and preaching of John the Baptist in the desert (v. 4).

The words of verse 1 are understood by some to be the title of this Gospel of St. Mark, and to form a complete, absolute sentence, independent of what follows. According to these, the words of verses 2, 3, "*As it is written*," &c., commence a conditional sentence, dependant for its absolute completeness on verse 4, thus: "*As the Prophet Isaiah predicted in the words, A voice of one crying, &c., prepare ye the way of the Lord;*" so (v. 4), "*John*"—the Baptist, in fulfilment of this prophecy—"was in the desert baptizing," &c. These expositors say, the words of verse 1 are placed absolutely here, as St. Matthew places absolutely, the opening words of his Gospel, "*Liber generationis Jesu Christi filii David*," &c.

In support of this construction, which makes the words of verse 2, "*As it is written*," &c., the commencement of a sentence, completed or rendered absolute in verse 4, they say, this is the very same idea conveyed in St. Luke, in an inverted form, (iii. 2, &c.), "*the word of the Lord was made unto John . . . as it was written in the book of the sayings of Isaiah*," &c.

Others maintain, that the words of this verse (1) are not the title, but the Preface or Introduction to the Gospel, as the words, "*The beginning*," clearly show, and that they are to be connected with the words of verse 4, the intermediate verses, 2, 3, being, to some extent, parenthetical. The beginning of the joyous message of salvation brought about by Jesus Christ, the Son of God (2, 3, in accordance with the prediction of the Prophets), was as follows: "*John was in the desert*," &c. (verse 4). This seems to be the more probable construction (see Patrizzi, Lib. iii., Disser. xlv. 1, 2).

It is observed by commentators, that each of the four Evangelists commences his Gospel in a way quite peculiar to himself. Matthew and John commence with our Lord's generation. The former, with His Human; the latter, with His Divine and Eternal Generation; while Mark and Luke open the Gospel with the history of our Lord's precursor; the former, with the history of his preaching and ministry; the latter, with the history of his wonderful and miraculous birth.

"*Of the Gospel*." The word, "*Gospel*," here signifies, not a book or writing, as it does when we use the words the "*Gospel of St. Matthew, St. Mark*," &c.; but, the doctrine or joyous message of salvation through Jesus Christ, preached to the world, in which sense it is said, "*Believe the Gospel*" (verse 15); "*Preach the Gospel to every creature*," (xvi. 15). "*Of Jesus Christ*." Some interpreters (Rosenmüller Schol. in hunc locum, &c.) understand "*of*," to mean, *concerning* Jesus Christ, as in the phrase, *the Gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. iv. 23); "*the Gospel of peace*" (Ephes. vi. 15). The preaching, then, of this joyous message concerning Christ, might be said to have commenced with John, although obscurely and remotely predicted by others; because, he immediately proclaimed Christ, and commenced with the same theme of preaching that He afterwards commenced with, viz., "*Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*," which was to lead to the spiritual and eternal blessings secured by the Gospel. "*Do penance*," the first theme of Evangelical preaching, was commenced by John, and perfected by Christ.

"*The Son of God*." As St. Matthew commences his Gospel with the history of Christ as "*son of David, the son of Abraham*," thus literally describing His human nature; so, Mark, the disciple of St. Peter, proclaims in a sense equally literal, His Divine nature, by styling Him, "*the Son of God*," thus re-echoing the memorable confession of St. Peter, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt. xvi. 16).

2, 3. "*As it is written in Isaias the Prophet, 'Behold I send,'*" &c. The words of verse 3 are taken from Isaias; but, the words of verse 2 are quoted from Malachias (iii. 1). Hence, interpreters are more or less perplexed in endeavouring to explain why the quotation, taken partly from Malachias, partly from Isaias, should be exclusively ascribed by St. Mark to the latter. In the ordinary Greek reading it is, *εν τοις προφηταις*, as is written, *in the Prophets*. In this reading the difficulties at once vanish. But the Vulgate reading, besides being the reading of all Latin copies, is that of most versions, the Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Persian, Arabic, and found in all the writings of the holy Fathers, who quote from this passage, and also of many Greek copies, of which seven are quoted by Mill (Nov. Græc. Test. in Marcum i. 2), among them the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Cantabrigiensis. Among critics, Griesbach (Nov. Test. in Marcum i. 2), prefers the Vulgate to the ordinary Greek reading. The question, then, with those who adopt the Vulgate, is, how to explain the above difficulty. Some, with St. Augustine, say, that as Isaias was the more celebrated, and had prophesied before Malachias in reference to the Baptist; hence, the Evangelist, having principally in his mind to quote Isaias, who was the first to

prophecy on the subject of the Baptist's mission, incidentally inserted the prophecy of Malachias, to show the thorough agreement of the Prophets on this important point, and quotes only Isaias. The words, "*Behold I send my Angel,*" &c. (Mal. iii. 1), refers to the same person, John the Baptist, and to the same preparation is referred to by Isaias in the words, "*A voice of one . . . prepare ye the ways of the Lord,*" &c. This preparation is more especially and particularly mentioned by the Baptist, "*Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Others, with Patrizzi, account for it in this way (Lib. iii. Disser. xlv. 16-19). First, after noticing that the quotation here is not called, the prophecy of Isaias; nor said to be spoken by Isaias; but, "*written in Isaias,*" that is, in the Book of Isaias the Prophet, these interpreters observe, that the Jews were wont to name each book of the Bible, from the first word with which it commenced; thus they called the Book of Genesis, *Beresith*; Proverbs, *Misle*, &c. So, also, probably, it was usual with them to classify the books of Sacred Scripture under the heads of Law, Prophets, Psalms, and to quote a passage contained in any one book, included under any division, from the first book which headed that division. Hence, as Isaias headed the volume of the Book of Prophets, any quotation from the other Prophets would be quoted from Isaias, or from the volume commencing with Isaias the Prophet. Our Lord Himself quoting the books of the Old Testament, that referred to Him, divides them, in accordance with Jewish usage, into "*the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms*" (Luke xxiv. 44). "*PSALMS*" is quoted for all the *Hagiographa*, it being the first book of the volume designated by that name.

"*As it is written,*" &c. The Evangelist quotes the Prophets, to add greater weight to the testimony and preaching of the Baptist, whose public mission was not casual or fortuitous, as it had been long before predicted by the Prophets. Hence, his teaching contained nothing novel; all he said, and all he did, were not the result of any human arrangements. They had been long before arranged by God's providence.

"*Behold I send My Angel,*" &c. (Mal. iii. 1.) These words had been already applied by our Lord Himself to the Baptist (Matt. xi. 10). The reading in the Evangelists differs somewhat from that of the Prophet, as well in the Hebrew as in the Septuagint. In the Hebrew it is, *Behold I send My Angel . . . before My face*. The Septuagint differs from this only in one word. Instead of, "*I send,*" it is in the future, "*I shall send.*" Here it is, "*before Thy face . . . prepare Thy way, before Thee*. But, this trifling difference does not prejudice the substantial identity of meaning in both. Neither do the Evangelists, nor our Lord, always quote the identical words of the Prophets. They content themselves sometimes with quoting the true sense of a passage. St. Jerome (in Isaiam, Lib. iii. c. 7), tells us, "*in multis testimoniis quæ Apostoli vel Evangelistæ de veteribus Libris assumpserunt, curiosius attendendum est, non eos verborum ordinem secutos esse sed sensum.*" The words here quoted are, according to the Evangelist, addressed by God the Father to His Son, the Messiah, whom the Jews were anxiously expecting to come to His temple (see Matt. xi. 10).

3. (See Matt. iii. 3.)

4. "*Baptizing and preaching,*" &c. There is an inversion of order here. John first preached the Baptism of Penance, and afterwards, baptized. By this, some understand the baptism of Christ, which John announced to be near at hand. It remitted sin, and required Penance as a necessary disposition. Hence, St. Peter

says (Acts ii. 38), "*Do penance, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.*" It is more likely, however, that it refers to John's own baptism, called "*Baptism of Penance*," because, it brought men to penance, and was, as it were, a certain protestation, whereby men professed they would do penance, and received it in testimony of their desire to change their former sinful lives, and enter on a new life of penance, for the purpose of obtaining the remission of their sins. This remission was to come from their belief in the Gospel, and from the baptism of Christ, for which John's baptism prepared and disposed them. John's baptism did not, of itself, remit sin, nor did it confer sanctifying grace (see Matt. iii. 6). It only disposed men, after doing penance, for receiving the Gospel, and the baptism of Christ, whose superior excellence John made the coming of the people to receive his own baptism, the befitting occasion of proclaiming and testifying to, with the full force of his own sacred character and authority.

5-8. (See Matt. iii. 4-10.)

11. "*Thou art*," &c. The same is the form of words in St. Luke, also (iii. 22). In St. Matthew (iii. 17) it is, "*This is My beloved Son*," &c. But, as Jerome, already referred to, observes, the sacred writers, when quoting the words of others, regard not so much the words as the sense. The sense here is the same, whether the Heavenly Father speaks of His Son, or speaks to Him directly.

12. (See Matt. iv. 1.) "*Drove Him*," shows the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in our Lord in all His fulness, and influenced Him to act energetically, but freely.

13. "*With the beasts*," shows the utterly desolate condition of the desert where He was (see Matt. iv. 1-11).

14. "According to the natural course of events, the history of John's imprisonment recorded (vi. 17-20), should be given here. But St. Mark, following St. Matthew, describes the history of John's imprisonment and death together, when the occasion arose after John's death for referring to them.

Our Lord came to Jerusalem for the Paschal solemnity (John ii. 13), and remained in Judea while John was exercising his ministry (John iii. 22-31). After John's imprisonment, He returned from Judea to Galilee, as is mentioned here, and Matt. iv. 12.

"*The kingdom of God*," has the same signification as "*kingdom of heaven*," in St. Matthew, by whom alone the words, "*kingdom of heaven*," are used.

"*Preaching the Gospel*." After John was confined, our Redeemer commenced to preach publicly, and opened with the same theme as John, thus confirming John's preaching and doctrine.

15. "*The time is accomplished*," i.e., the time of grace, of salvation, of superabundant mercy, brought about by the Saviour, predetermined from eternity, foretold by the Law and the Prophets, and long and anxiously expected by you. "*And the kingdom of God is at hand*." In order, therefore, to benefit by the season of grace and prepare for the kingdom of God, you must adopt the necessary means. These are, to "*repent*," of your former sinful lives, and "*believe the Gospel*," to unhesitatingly believe in the joyous message of salvation, and all the truths it proposes

for belief. This is a brief summary of all our Lord's preaching during His life. Faith in all the truths of the Gospel and works expressed in the word, "*repent*" (see Matt. iv. 17). For meaning of word, "*repent*" (see Matt. iii. 2).

16-20. (See Matt. iv. 18-22.)

21. "*They enter Capharnaum,*" after returning from the borders of the lake, where He walked, and called the Apostles (see Matt. iv. 13).

"*Forthwith,*" does not mean, that He went straight to the synagogue on His return from the lake; for, it was not on a Sabbath-day the call of the Apostles took place, since they were engaged, when called, in fishing and mending their nets (verses 16-19). Nor does it convey, that our Lord entered the synagogue for the first time. For, as appears from Matthew and Luke, He did so often before this. It only means that, at the nearest fitting opportunity, the next Sabbath-day, He entered the synagogue to teach, and continued to do so on subsequent befitting occasions, on Sabbaths and festivals, when the people came together to hear the Word of God.

22. "*And they were astonished,*" &c. St. Luke says the same (iv. 32). The Greek word, ἐξεπλησσοντο, means, they were *wonderfully struck*, or, *enraptured* (see Matt. vii. 28, 29).

"*Scribes.*" (See Matt. ii. 4.)

23. "*Synagogue.*" (See Matt. iv. 23.) "*A man with an unclean spirit.*" This man may have been in the synagogue before our Lord arrived there; or, probably, he may have been brought there to be cured by our Lord, in presence of so many witnesses who assembled in the synagogue (John xviii. 20), God's providence so arranging it, in order that our Lord might thus confirm His teaching by a miracle. The devil does not shrink from holy places, where he "*takes away the Word out of the hearts of many*" (Luke viii. 12).

"*With an unclean spirit.*" The Greek for "*with,*" is, *in*, conveying, that the man in question was completely overpowered and regulated by the spirit, just as we say of a man prostrate from fever, *he is in fever*. *In*, often signifies, *with*; or, *having*. Thus, a man is said to be *in arms*, i.e., *carrying arms*.

The spirit is called "*unclean,*" because, delighting in, and stimulating to, acts of uncleanness. (See Matt. x. 1, &c.) The Greek of St. Luke (iv. 33), has, "*the spirit of an unclean devil,*" which is a blending together of synonymous terms, to express more forcibly the idea of a spirit who was an *unclean devil*. The word, δαίμων (devil), was used by the ancients, sometimes in a good sense (St. Augustine, de Civitate Dei, Lib. 9; Plato, in Timeo, Lactantius, Lib. 21). Plato applied the word even to the Great Ruler of the universe. St. Augustine, however, observes, in the same book, that in SS. Scripture the word always designates evil, wicked spirits, the implacable enemies of the human race, whom they are permitted sometimes to harass *externally*. At other times they are, by Divine permission, allowed to do so *internally*, entering man's body and dwelling there as in a place of abode; nay, acting upon him, employing all his members at will, speaking through him, or depriving him of speech or hearing. That they sometimes resided *within* man is clear from our Redeemer expelling and driving them out. Such as were thus possessed were called by the Latins, *arrepititi*; by the Greeks, *energumēni*, because *worked upon* by some being existing *within* them. The number of those thus afflicted was greater in the days of our Redeemer than

afterwards, God so arranging it in order to show the power of His Son over the devils, whose empire He destroyed by His coming. (Jansenius Gandav., c. xxviii.)

"*And he cried out.*" The presence of Christ so tortured the demon, who felt the Divine power of our Lord, and probably anticipated his own expulsion, that he cried out, or rather made the possessed man cry out.

24. "*What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth?*" (See Matt. viii. 29.) What have we done to provoke your interference with us? The Greek here has, *ἔα*, which is omitted in the Vulgate and Syriac versions altogether. The Vulgate has it in Luke (iv. 34), *sine*, "*let us alone.*" Some commentators understand it merely as a simple exclamation, like the Latin, *Ah*.

"*To destroy us.*" To complete our destruction, by ruining our power and driving us prematurely to the infernal abyss, in reserve for us, where our tortures shall be finally consummated and aggravated by our being deprived of the malicious power to injure men.

"*The Holy One of God.*" We mean you no harm. We fully acknowledge you to be "*the Holy One*," &c. This was probably said with a view of conciliating our Lord, and of inducing Him not to expel him. "*The Holy One*"—the Messiah—who by excellence is Holy, long since predicted by the Prophets as such, and specially styled by Daniel (ix. 24), "*the Saint of saints.*"

25. "*Threatened him, saying.*" Commanding him with power and majesty, 1st, to "*speak no more*," as He would not have the spirit of wickedness speak in praise of infinite purity and sanctity, nor did He wish to receive any testimony of truth from the father of lies, this wicked, deceitful spirit, or have any communication whatever with him. Moreover, the time for manifesting who He was had not yet arrived. Hence, He strictly charges the Apostles (viii. 30), not to say He was the Christ. 2ndly. He commanded him to go out of the man possessed.

26. "*Tearing him.*" Endeavouring to tear him, and agitating him by violent convulsions. That he did not actually tear his limbs, we are assured by St. Luke, who says (iv. 35), "*he hurt him not at all.*" The demon was permitted thus to attempt to tear him, to show his malice, and the magnitude of the benefit resulting from the cure, which freed him from so malicious a spirit; and the greatness of our Lord's power was shown in His not permitting the wicked demon to injure the man.

It is remarked by Patrizzi (*in hunc locum*), that this instance alone would suffice to refute those who admit nothing in Energuments, but the natural form of disease; for, who could threaten or rebuke a disease, and order it to be silent? or how could a disease, crying out with a loud voice, go out of a man?

27. "*With power*," without any prayers to God, any rites whatsoever, by His sole word of command, He drives him out, unlike the exorcists among the Jews (Matt. xii. 27; Acts xix. 13).

"*Amazed*," or astounded. The Greek word, *εθαμβήσαν*, expresses amazement, mixed with terror, *θαμβος*.

"*This new doctrine*," about the kingdom of heaven, &c., hitherto unheard of, must be Divine and heavenly, since the man who propounds it is gifted with the Divine power, which, by His sole word, He exercises over the demons.

TEXT.

29. *And immediately going out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.*

30. *And Simon's wife's mother lay in a fit of a fever : and forthwith they tell him of her*

31. *And coming to her he lifted her up, taking her by the hand : and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.*

32. *And when it was evening after sunset, they brought to him all that were ill, and that were possessed with devils.*

33. *And all the city was gathered together at the door.*

34. *And he healed many that were troubled with divers diseases ; and he cast out many devils, and he suffered them not to speak, because they knew him.*

35. *And rising very early, going out he went into a desert place : and there he prayed.*

36. *And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.*

37. *And when they had found him, they said to him, All seek for thee.*

38. *And he saith to them : Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities, that I may preach there also : for to this purpose am I come.*

39. *And he was preaching in their synagogues, and in all Galilee, and casting out devils.*

40. *And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down said to him : If thou wilt ; thou can make me clean.*

41. *And Jesus having compassion on him, stretched forth his hand : and touching him, saith to him : I will. Be thou made clean.*

42. *And when he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean.*

43. *And he strictly charged him, and forthwith sent him away.*

44. *And he saith to him : See thou tell no one, but go, show thyself to the high priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.*

45. *But he being gone out, began to publish, and to blaze abroad the word ; so that he could not openly go into the city, but was without in desert places, and they flocked to him from all sides.*

COMMENTARY.

29. The above occurrence took place on the Sabbath (vv. 21-23) ; and on the same Sabbath occurred what follows, as is clear from this passage, and also from Luke iv. 38. This miracle is omitted by St. Matthew, but recorded by St. Luke (iv. 33).

30, 31. (See Matt. viii. 14, 15.)

32. See Matt. viii. 16, where the reason is assigned for their having waited till after sunset, when the Jewish Sabbath ceased. From this, as well as Luke (iv. 40), it seems clear, the cases referred to here occurred on the evening of the same Sabbath-day referred to above. St. Mark pointedly says, it was "*after sunset*," to show he referred to the Jewish Sabbath.

He also distinguishes "*those possessed with devils*," from those "*that were ill*," to convey to us that the former were really possessed (τοὺς δαμονιζομένους).

34. Here He also distinguishes "*many diseases*," from "*devils*," whom He "*cast out*," and suffered them not "*to speak, for they knew Him*." How could these words be understood of natural diseases, as Rationalists would have it ?

"*Because, they knew Him*." Most likely, the devil knew Him to be the Son of God. Nor are the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii.), opposed to this (see Matt. viii. 29).

It is observed by some commentators (Patrizzi, &c.), that the occurrences which

took place at Peter's house are more fully recorded here by St. Mark (29-34) than they had been by St. Matthew (viii. 14-16), which seems to corroborate the tradition of the ancients, that it was under St. Peter's supervision, Mark wrote his Gospel. It is also observed that what refers to St. Peter (vv. 37, 38), has been recorded by Mark only.

35. "*Very early.*" This is not opposed to what St. Luke says (iv. 42), "*And when it was day,*" as it is probable both refer to the *morning twilight*, when there was some darkness, and still it was in a certain sense, "*day.*"

Our Lord went into the desert—1st. To give us an example of humility, to teach us, whenever we have performed any praiseworthy actions, to avoid all human applause, and decline all occasions of receiving the incense of human praise and flattery. 2ndly. As is expressly mentioned here, to pray to His Heavenly Father, to thank Him for the benefits already bestowed through His ministry, and to invoke the Divine benedictions on His future labours. This, too, was intended for our instruction.

36, 37. This is easily reconciled with St. Luke, "*the multitude sought Him.*" St. Luke does not deny what St. Mark states here. The multitude sought Him, after He was found by Peter, and those who were with Him, viz., Andrew, James and John. Both accounts are strictly true.

38. Most likely, the Apostles desired, without expressing it, that He would return to Capharnaum, where He was so much sought after by the people; and our Redeemer meets this tacit wish, on their part, by saying, that other cities, to whom He had not yet preached, required Him more than the Capharnaïtes did, who had been already so singularly favoured with His preaching and miracles.

"*And He saith to them*" i.e., the Apostles. Luke (iv. 43) says, He said the same to the multitudes, that sought to detain Him among them. Addressing the Apostles, "*to this purpose I am come,*" thereby asserting His own Divine authority. Addressing the multitudes (Luke iv. 43), "*I am sent,*" by My Heavenly Father, thereby asserting the authority of His Father. Addressing the multitude, He speaks with greater humility of Himself than when addressing His disciples privately, to whom He makes known His own Divine power and authority. *He came and was sent*, not to receive human applause, but to do the work of His Father.

40-44. (See Matt. viii. 2-4.)

44. "*To the High Priest.*" In the Greek copies it is, "*to the Priest,*" as it is also read in the Vulgate of Matthew and Luke (v. 14), and in the law, relating to the cleansing of a leprous man. (Lev. xiv. 2, &c.)

45. How he could do this without violating the substance or spirit of our Lord's injunction (see Matt. viii. 4; ix. 31).

"*He could not,*" without being followed by admiring crowds, which He did not wish, "*go openly,*" which conveys, that He was to go privately and unexpectedly, "*into the city,*" which some understand of Capharnaum; others, of the *cities in general* of Galilee, where He was engaged in preaching the Gospel.

"*They flocked to Him from all sides.*" The Evangelist, here, probably, refers to occasions, like those recorded by Matthew (xiv. 13; xv. 30; Luke ix. 11; John vi.), when our Lord had recourse to a miracle to save the vast multitudes from starvation.

CHAPTER II.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, St. Mark records the cure of the paralytic—the blasphemies of the Scribes—the admiration of the multitude at witnessing the miracle (1-12). The vocation of St. Matthew—the murmuring of the Scribes, &c., at our Lord's condescension in associating with sinners (13-16). Our Lord's crushing replies to their malignant taunts (17-22). His vindication of the conduct of His Apostles, when passing through the corn field, they plucked ears of corn (23-28).

TEXT.

AND again he entered into Capharnaum after some days.

2. *And it was heard that he was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room, no not even at the door; and he spoke to them the word.*

3. *And they came to him bringing one sick of the palsy, who was carried by four.*

4. *And when they could not offer him unto him for the multitude, they uncovered the roof where he was: and opening it they let down the bed wherein the man sick of the palsy lay.*

5. *And when Jesus had seen their faith, he saith to the sick of the palsy: Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

6. *And there were some of the scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts:*

7. *Why doth this man speak thus? he blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?*

8. *Which Jesus presently knowing in his spirit, that they so thought within themselves, saith to them: Why think you these things in your hearts?*

9. *Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed, and walk?*

10. *But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy),*

11. *I say to thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.*

12. *And immediately he arose; and taking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all, so that all wondered, and glorified God, saying: We never saw the like.*

13. *And he went forth again to the sea side: and all the multitude came to him, and he taught them.*

14. *And when he was passing by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith to him: Follow me. And rising up he followed him.*

15. *And it came to pass, that as he sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat down together with Jesus and his disciples. For they were many, who also followed him.*

16. *And the scribes and the Pharisees, seeing that he ate with publicans and sinners, said to his disciples: Why doth your master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*

17. *Jesus hearing this, saith to them: They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. For I came not to call the just, but sinners.*

18. *And the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast: and they come, and say to him: Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast: but thy disciples do not fast.*

19. *And Jesus saith to them: Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.*

20. *But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them: and then they shall fast in those days.*

21. *No man seweth a piece of raw cloth to an old garment: otherwise the new piecing taketh away from the old, and there is made a greater rent.*

22. *And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: otherwise the wine will burst the bottles, and both the wine will be spilled, and the bottles will be lost. But new wine must be put into new bottles.*

23. *And it came to pass again, as the Lord walked through the corn-fields on the sabbath, that his disciples began to go forward and to pluck the ears of corn.*

24. *And the Pharisees said to him: Behold, why do they on the sabbath-day that which is not lawful?*

25. *And he said to them: Have you never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry himself, and they that were with him?*

26. *How he went into the house of God under Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the loaves of proposition which was not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave to them who were with him?*

27. *And he said to them: The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.*

28. *Therefore the son of man is Lord of the sabbath also.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "*And again He entered Capharnaum.*" Most likely, *privately*, to avoid the crowds who were sure to follow Him (i. 45). The same is clearly to be inferred from verse 2, in which it is said, "*it was heard,*" rumoured abroad, through the city, that He was in the house.

"*After some days.*" The number of days is not determined. It must be considerable, as our Lord had preached in the synagogues throughout Galilee (i. 39); and as this could have occurred only on Sabbath-days, several Sabbath-days must, therefore, have intervened between our Lord's retiring from Capharnaum, after curing Peter's mother-in-law, and His return referred to here. Hence, the reading found in some Latin and Greek copies, "*after eight days,*" is utterly impossible; as what is recorded in i. 39, could not be accomplished within eight days.

2. "*In the house,*" probably Peter's house, where He used to resort to in Capharnaum (i. 29). The space near the door could not contain the multitude that crowded to see and hear our Lord. The Evangelist mentions this, to show that there were numerous witnesses of the miracle he is about to record. St. Luke makes a similar statement, doubtless with the same object (c. v. 17), when about to record the same miracle

3. (See Matt. ix. 2-8.)

12. "*All wondered.*" The Greek word, *ἐξίστασθαι*, means, to be in ecstasy, and transported with wonder.

"*We never saw the like,*" i.e., the people of Israel, God's own chosen people, never witnessed in any preceding age, such miracles as these.

13. "*Again to the sea side.*" "*Again,*" because He had been there before (i. 35). "*And all the multitude came, and He taught them.*" Very likely, there were many merchants and men intent on gain, who did not come to Peter's house (i. 33), to hear Him—although "*all,*" i.e., the greater part of "*the city was gathered together at the door*"—nor to where He cured the paralytic (v. 2), and, our Redeemer wishing to gain their souls, goes forth to the borders of the lake, where this class of negligent men were engaged in commercial pursuits. Hence, He teaches the multitude there. Likely, He had in view to call Matthew, who was employed there, as appears from the event.

14. (See Matt. ix. 9-10.)

15. "*In his house*," i.e., the house of Levi or Matthew, who, we are informed by St. Luke (c. v. 29), "*made a great feast in his own house*," for our Redeemer.

16, 17. (See Matt. xi. 11, 12, 13.)

18. (See Matt. xi. 14.)

19. (See Matt. xi. 15.)

21, 22. (See Matt. xi. 16, 17.)

23. "*Again*," does not mean that the disciples repeated the act of plucking the ears of corn, as they did before. It refers to the Pharisees, who again took occasion to accuse our Lord, as they had done already (v. 6).

23-26. (See Matt. xii. 1-5.)

27. (See Matt. xii. 8.)

28. "*Therefore*." There seems to be nothing in what precedes to warrant us in taking "*therefore*," in its ordinary acceptation, as expressing a *vis consequentiæ*, unless it be thus supplemented: As the Son of man is Lord of all men; He is also Lord of all things created for man's benefit, and therefore, Lord of the Sabbath, instituted for man. It is regarded by some interpreters, as simply conveying the chief or concluding reason of all. *In short—in a word*, passing over every other reason—"the Son of man," &c.

CHAPTER III.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist records the cure of a man with a withered hand, in the synagogue—the murmuring of his enemies—our Redeemer's refutation of them (1-5). Their plotting with the Herodians to find matter for accusation against Him—the several miracles He wrought, among the rest, on those possessed by devils, who proclaim Him to be the Son of God (6-12). The election of the Apostles (12-19). The visit of His friends from Nazareth, in order to take Him away. His refutation of the blasphemies of the Scribes (20-31). His description of who His mother, and brothers, and sisters were (31-35).

TEXT.

AND he entered again into the synagogue, and there was a man there who had a withered hand.

2. And they watched him whether he would heal on the sabbath-days; that they might accuse him.

3. And he saith to the man who had the withered hand: Stand up in the midst.

4. And he saith to them: Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy? But they held their peace.

5. And looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts, he saith to the man: Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored unto him.

6. And the Pharisees going out immediately made a consultation with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

7. But Jesus retired with his disciples to the sea; and a great multitude followed him, from Galilee and Judea,

8. *And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond the Jordan. And they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing the things which he did, came to him.*

9. *And he spoke to his disciples that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.*

10. *For he healed many, so that they pressed upon him to touch him, as many as had evils.*

11. *And the unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him: and they cried, saying:*

12. *Thou art the Son of God. And he strictly charged them that they should not make him known.*

COMMENTARY.

1. St. Luke (vi. 6), tells us this occurred "*on another Sabbath*," different from that on which His disciples plucked the ears of corn. The Jews were wont to assemble in the synagogues on Sabbath-days for the purpose of prayer, and hearing the Word of God (see Matt. xii. 9-13).

"*Withered hand*," which St. Luke says, was his "*right hand*."

2. "*And they watched Him*," clearly refers to the Pharisees, from the context St. Matthew also says (xii. 10), they interrogated Him on the subject of the Sabbath, not for the purpose of information or self improvement, but all from the malicious motive of accusing Him (Matthew xii. 10).

3. (See Matt. xii. 13.)

4. (See Matt. xii. 10, 11, 12.) As they could not deny one portion of His questions, regarding the doing of good, the saving on the Sabbath-day, nor affirm the other portion, about doing evil or destroying; hence, their silence. But this forced silence evinced the most crushing refutation.

5. (See Matt. xii. 13.)

6. (See Matt. xii. 14.) Who the "*Herodians*" were, is explained (Matt. xxii. 16).

7, 8. (See Matt. xii. 15.) "*Idumea*," to the south of Judea, was the farthest off from Capharnaum, of all the districts here referred to.

"*From beyond the Jordan*," the region called *Peræa*. "*Tyre and Sidon*," cities of Phœnicia (Luke vi. 17, 18).

9, 10. Residing on the borders of the lake, He wished to have a boat always in readiness for Himself and His Apostles, which He might call His own, and use for crossing the lake when necessary. He might also use it, to teach the crowds, who pressed upon Him so eagerly as to render it inconvenient to address them on the shore. He might also have in view to show the crowds, that if they acted unreasonably, He could, at any moment, leave and cross the lake in some other direction.

10. "*Evils*." The Greek is, *μαστιγας*—"scourges," grievous disorders, which were a scourge or source of great pain to the sufferers.

11. What the persons possessed by "*unclean spirits*" did, is here ascribed to the "*spirits*" themselves, because the wretched *energumeni*, acted on by the spirits, were

not free, or their own masters; they acted as the spirits impelled them (see i. 23, 26). If the ailments of those who are described as possessed by evil spirits, were only some ordinary natural disease, as Rationalists teach, how comes it, that persons thus affected were the only persons to know our Lord to be "*the Son of God?*"

12. "*The Son of God*" could not be understood in that general sense, in which all good men are called "*sons of God*" (1 John iii. 1); for, if this were the meaning, why should our Lord "*charge them not to make Him known?*" The making Him known in this sense, would be only proclaiming Him a just man. Hence, He is called, "*the Son of God;*" or, as in Greek (τὸν Θεόν), "*of the God,*" in the strict sense of *the eternally begotten, consubstantial Son of God.*

"*He strictly charged them.*" If this refers to the demons, then, the reasons of this charge are assigned (i. 25). It may refer to the men cured, as would seem from St. Matthew (xii. 16). Our Redeemer's motive was twofold—1st. To avoid the imputation of vainglory; 2ndly. To avoid further irritating the Pharisees.

TEXT.

13. *And going up into a mountain, he called unto him whom he would himself; and they came to him.*

14. *And he made that twelve should be with him, and that he might send them to preach.*

15. *And he gave them power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.*

16. *And to Simon he gave the name Peter.*

17. *And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he named them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder:*

18. *And Andrew and Philip, and Bartholomew and Matthew, and Thomas and James of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Cananean.*

19. *And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

20. *And they come to a house, and the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.*

21. *And when his friends had heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him. For they said: He is become mad.*

22. *And the scribes who were come down from Jerusalem, said: He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils he casteth out devils.*

23. *And after he had called them together, he said to them in parables: How can satan cast out satan?*

24. *And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.*

25. *And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*

26. *And if satan be risen up against himself, he is divided and cannot stand, but hath an end.*

27. *No man can enter into the house of a strong man and rob him of his goods, unless he first bind the strong man, and then shall he plunder his house.*

28. *Amen, I say to you, that all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and the blasphemies wherewith they shall blaspheme:*

29. *But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin.*

30. *Because they said: He hath an unclean spirit.*

COMMENTARY.

13. "*Going up into a mountain,*" near the Lake of Genesareth, "*He called unto Him whom He would.*" St. Luke (vi. 12) says, "*He went out into a mountain to pray, and*

He passed the whole night in the prayer of God." Prayer was certainly His object in retiring to the mountain. Likely, as the event shows, He had in view to choose His twelve Apostles in the morning, from among His disciples. "*When it was day, He called His disciples*" (Luke vi. 13). St. Mark says here, "*He called unto Him whom He would Himself,*" to show, how utterly gratuitous was this call on His part; altogether independent of their merits, actual or foreseen. He called, according to the purpose of His will, those whose call should be like that of Aaron (Heb. iv.), poor, illiterate fishermen—the weak, foolish, and contemptible things of this world—to confound the strong, the wise, and those held in consideration by the world.

14. "*And He made that twelve should be with Him,*" which means, He selected twelve out of the number. "*Be with Him,*" His constant associates and attendants, to constitute, as it were, His family and household. This was the first object for which He had chosen them; the second was, that, after learning the doctrines of eternal life from His own Divine lips, "*He might send them to preach*" in due course.

15. (See Matt. x. 1, &c.)

16. Simon was called Peter, the immovable rock on which He was to build His Church. (See Matt. xvi. 16, &c.)

17. "*Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder,*" that is, thunderers. Why He gave them this name, is variously accounted for. Some say, it was because of the wonderful power and energy they displayed in announcing, or thundering, to the world the truths of the Gospel, which made James to be such an object of hatred to Herod, as to be apprehended by him and put to death; and John, who survived all the other Apostles, showed the like energy in his writings, whereby he confounded all those heretics who denied Jesus to be the eternal Son of God. Baronius (Ann. 99) says, that when John commenced to write his Gospel, loud peals of thunder were heard, like to those that were heard at the giving of the Law on Sinai. These two Apostles, like thunder, sounded forth the terrors of the Divine judgments everywhere, and, by the salutary influence of holy fear, terrified men into the obedience of faith. Others say, the term is allusive to the occasion (Luke ix. 52-56) when they besought our Lord to command fire to descend from heaven on the obstinate Samaritans.

18, 19. (See Matt. x. 3, 4.)

20. Probably, there is question of Peter's house at Capharnaum, where He was wont to stop. This occurred after the Sermon on the Mount. (Luke vi. 17; vii. 1; Matt. v., vi. vii.) Such was the constant attendance of the crowd, attracted by His doctrine and miracles, that our Lord and His disciples had not time to take food.

21. When our Lord's relatives and friends, who knew Him from infancy, heard of His teaching and wonderful works, and of the crowds that everywhere followed Him (the Greek for *friends* is, *οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ*—*his own*), they "*went out*" from Nazareth, where they lived (Matt. xiii. 55, 56), to Capharnaum, to lay hold of Him and secure His person, as one whom they regarded as unfit to take care of Himself. It would, of course, be impious to say this of the Blessed Virgin and His believing relatives. It only applies to some of them, who did not yet believe in Him (John vii. 5.) In

this, they were actuated by a feeling of friendship, and from a conviction that, as His friends, they were bound and had a right to do so. "*For they said: He is become mad.*" The Greek word, *εξεστη*, means, *transported out of his wits*, become beside Himself. Our Lord was not alone in bearing this reproach. At all times does the world regard those as mad, who, giving up all, follow Christ. On the Day of Judgment, however, worldlings shall see their error, and be forced to cry out in despair, "*Nos insensati, vitam illorum, estimabamus insaniam . . . ecce, nunc, inter sanctos sors illorum est.*" Some commentators say, our Lord's friends did not really believe Him to be mad, but that they affected to think so. This they did, in order to save both Him and themselves from the great danger they and He would incur, owing to the commotions excited on occasion of His preaching, and the envy and jealousy of the ruling powers among the Jews, this "*evil and adulterous generation,*" this "*generation of vipers*" (Matt. xii. 34-39), whose errors and hypocrisy He never failed to make the subject of His unsparing denunciations.

22. "*And the Scribes, who were come down from Jerusalem.*" "*Come down,*" because Jerusalem was built on hilly grounds, higher than Galilee. It is recorded (Matt. xii. 22; Luke xi. 14), that our Lord had cast out a deaf and dumb devil, in presence of these calumniators. St. Matthew (xii. 24) calls them, "*Pharisees.*" It may be, they were the same, and that the Pharisees, too, were "*Scribes,*" doctors of the Law; or, it may be, that the Evangelists indifferently call them *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, as both were joined in the unholy work of thwarting our Lord.

The events recorded in the remainder of this chapter occurred, not immediately after what is recorded in the preceding part, but after the lapse of a year. Certain other occurrences intervened, also, recorded later on by St. Mark, who, any more than St. Matthew, does not always observe in his narrative the order of events. He sometimes describes them out of the order in which they occurred. What is described here (iv. 1, 10, 12), should be inserted between verses 21 and 22 (see Matt. xii. 22). What is described (v. 21) took place in Galilee, before the Pasch and midsummer of the year of our Lord 28.; and what is described (22-35) took place in the autumn of 28, after the Feast of Tabernacles (Patrizzi).

22-30. (See Matt. xii. 24-32; Luke xi. 14, &c.)

23. By "*parable*" is here meant, a *simile* or illustration. Our Lord refutes His adversaries—1st. By showing the utter absurdity of what they allege.

24-25. It would be sheer folly to think that Satan, this crafty spirit, would expel Satan, as this would result in the destruction of his own power.

26. Hence, our Lord could have nothing in common with Satan.

27. 2ndly. By showing that He must be stronger than Satan, since He forcibly drives him out. Hence, it cannot be that it is by Satan's power He overcomes and disarms Satan.

29. "*Everlasting sin.*" The Greek for "*sin*" is, *κρισις* (*judgment*). He shall be liable to an *everlasting judgment* of condemnation.

30. These are the words of the Evangelist, assigning a reason why our Lord

referred to the sin against the Holy Ghost; because the Scribes and Pharisees committed that sin, and incurred the judgment of everlasting condemnation annexed to it.

TEXT.

31. *And his mother and his brethren came; and standing without sent unto him calling him.*

32. *And the multitude sat about him; and they say to him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.*

33. *And answering them, he said: Who is my mother and my brethren?*

34. *And looking round about on them who sat about him, he saith: Behold my mother and my brethren.*

35. *For whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother, and my sister, and mother.*

COMMENTARY.

31. (See Matt. xii. 46-50.) Regarding the incident here referred to by St. Mark. Commentators are agreed that it is the same as recorded by St. Matthew (as above). It is said by many, that St. Luke refers to the same occurrence; although it is held by others, among them Patrizzi (*in hunc locum*), that St. Luke records a similar, but not the same occurrence. It is most likely, however, that the three Evangelists refer to the same thing. Matthew and Mark observe the order of events, as they record this occurrence in connexion with the expulsion of the mute devil. Hence, St. Matthew says, "*And while He was yet speaking to the multitude,*" thus specifying the order of events. St. Luke omits any such words, and merely records it as happening at some indefinite time.

CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, St. Mark records the Parable of the Sower, and its explanation by our Lord, together with the reason assigned by Him for addressing the multitude in parables (1-20). He addresses to them other parables (21-35). He stills the tempest at sea (36-40).

TEXT

AND again he began to teach by the sea side; and a great multitude was gathered together unto him: so that he went up into a ship and sat in the sea, and all the multitude was upon the land by the sea side.

2. *And he taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in his doctrine:*

3. *Hear ye, Behold, the sower went out to sow.*

4. *And whilst he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the birds of the air came and ate it up.*

5. *And other some fell upon stony ground where it had not much earth: and it shot up immediately, because it had no depth of earth.*

6. *And when the sun was risen, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away.*

7. *And some fell among thorns: and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.*

8. *And some fell upon good ground: and brought forth fruit that grew up, and increased, and yielded one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred.*

9. *And he said : He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*
10. *And when he was alone, the twelve that were with him asked him the parable.*
11. *And he said to them : To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God : but to them that are without, all things are done in parables :*
12. *That seeing they may see, and not perceive : and hearing they may hear, and not understand : lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*
13. *And he saith to them ; Are you ignorant of this parable ? and how shall you know all parables ?*
14. *He that soweth : soweth the word.*
15. *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown, and as soon as they have heard, immediately satan cometh, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*
16. *And these likewise are they that are sown on the stony ground : who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy.*
17. *And they have no root in themselves, but are only for a time ; and then when tribulation and persecution ariseth for the word, they are presently scandalized.*
18. *And others there are who are sown among thorns : these are they that hear the word.*
19. *And the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts after other things entering in choke the word, and it is made fruitless.*
20. *And these are they who are sown upon the good ground, who hear the word and receive it, and yield fruit, the one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred.*
21. *And he said to them : Doth a candle come in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed ? and not to be set on a candlestick ?*
22. *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be made manifest : neither was it made secret, but that it may come abroad.*
23. *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*
24. *And he said to them : Take heed what you hear. In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again, and more shall be given to you.*
25. *For he that hath, to him shall be given ; and he that hath not, that also which he hath shall be taken away from him.*
26. *And he said : So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth.*
27. *And should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up whilst he knoweth not.*
28. *For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear.*
29. *And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*
30. *And he said : To what shall we liken the kingdom of God ? or to what parable shall we compare it ?*
31. *It is as a grain of mustard-seed ; which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that are in the earth :*
32. *And when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of the air may dwell under the shadow thereof.*

COMMENTARY.

1. The event recorded here occurred, according to St. Matthew (xiii. 1), on the same day, or on the evening of the same day, with the occurrences mentioned in the preceding chapter.

"*And He began again,*" &c., has reference to what is stated (i. 16 ; ii. 13 ; iii. 9), where our Lord is said to have already on several occasions taught by the sea shore. It is clear, from this verse, that our Lord first taught on the sea shore, but the crowd

became so great, and pressed so inconveniently, that He was forced to get into a boat, out of which, as from a pulpit, He delivered His heavenly doctrines. It is likely this occurred at seed time, which suggested the following parable. Patrizzi and others say, that this took place after the Feast of Tabernacles, in the year 28.

2. (See Matt. xiii. 3, &c.)

3. This parable of the sower, and the other parables referred to in this chapter, which have for object, to illustrate what appertains to "*the kingdom of heaven*," have a very natural connexion with the teaching of our Redeemer in the preceding, regarding the will of God, and the observance of His precepts. Our Lord wishes to convey, that the mere hearing of His Word, the mere receiving of this Divine seed will not suffice. He Himself afterwards interprets the parable. (14, 15, &c.)

4-9. (See Matt. xiii. 3-10.)

10. St. Matthew (xiii.) states, that our Lord spoke before the people the other parables too, recorded (vv. 26-32); and after that, having sent away the crowds, came home (v. 36). And as St. Mark informs us in this chapter (v. 34), that our Lord was wont to explain the parables to His disciples "*apart*," when He was alone, it would then seem to follow, that our Lord explained the foregoing parable of the sower, after He had spoken the other parables publicly to the multitudes (vv. 26-32). Hence, in order of time, the intervening verses, between verses 10 and 20, should be placed after v. 34, and from verses 26-34 inserted between verses 9 and 10

10-20. (See Matt. xiii. 10-24.)

"*The twelve that were with Him*." This is the constant reading of all Latin versions. The Greek and Syriac versions have, "*they that were about Him with the twelve*," which is understood by Euthymius, to refer to the seventy-two disciples, as well as to the twelve Apostles.

11. "*To them that are without*," the multitude and such as were not among our Lord's constant attendants in the work of the ministry, referred to in the preceding verse (see Matt. xiii. 11), and the words apply particularly to such among them as did not wish, or did not care to believe the truths proposed by our Lord.

"*All things are done in parables*." All the truths appertaining to "*the kingdom of God*," are obscure, and veiled from their eyes, by a just judgment of God withholding His lights and graces, in punishment of their contumacy and malice, and especially, their abuse of grace. "*To them it is not given*" (Matt. xiii. 11).

12. St. Mark only briefly quotes the sense, but not the express words of the prophecy of Isaias (Matt. xiii. 14, 15). "*That*," does not express the end or *final motive* which our Lord had in view in speaking to them in parables; but only the effect. It is the same as, "*so that*." The consequence of it is, that in their regard is verified the prophecy of Isaias. Hence, in St. Matthew, it is *ὅτι*, "*because seeing they see not*," &c. St. Matthew describes the state of obstinate incredulity in which our Lord found the Jews, "*BECAUSE seeing they see not*," &c. St. Mark and St. Luke describe the condition of still greater obstinacy and credulity into which they were permitted to fall deeper and deeper in punishment of their sins, "*THAT, seeing they may not see*," &c., by rendering themselves unworthy of having their spiritual blindness taken away. The words of St. Mark, "*lest at any time*" (*μηποτε, nequando*), denotes liberty and free will. For,

with the aid of God, which He denies to no one, a man can become converted. However, on account of the obstacles which their own malice oppose to the operation of grace, many are never converted. Those who are without, perceive not what they see, and understand not what they hear, and thus through their own fault they, in some measure, oppose their own conversion and the remission of their sins. Our Lord fully quoted the prophecy of Isaias, as we are informed by St. Matthew (xiii. 14, 15), of which the sense is here briefly given by St. Mark.

13. In order to excite their attention, He reprehends them for their slowness of understanding "*this parable*," so easy and intelligible. "*How, then*." The Greek, *καὶ πῶς*, the force of *then* or *therefore*, as in c. x. 26, *καὶ τίς δύναται*, &c., "*Who, then, can be saved?*" Also, Luke xii. 29; 1 Cor. v. 13. "*All parables*," other parables, so obscure and hard to be understood.

21. "*He said to them*," that is, the disciples, as appears from the continuous account given by St. Luke (viii. 16). "*Doth a candle come in?*" Is a candle brought forward into a chamber or used?

This similitude is recorded by St. Matthew (c. v. 15), as spoken in the Sermon on the Mount. Very likely, He employed the same as being a trite, well-known proverb on more occasions than one, and on the present occasion among the rest.

There is a diversity of opinion among commentators about the connexion of this passage with what precedes. For, although the proverb regarding the light and candlestick be recorded on a different occasion by St. Matthew, viz., when delivering the Sermon on the Mount (c. v. 15); both St. Mark, here, and St. Luke (viii. 16, &c.), record these words as spoken immediately in connexion with the explanation given by our Lord to His disciples, of the parable of the sower. It is observed by some commentators, that possibly it may have no connexion with the preceding; that our Redeemer may have employed well-known proverbs and parables to illustrate His teachings on subjects quite unconnected with each other. Commentators, in tracing a connexion with the preceding, differ in their views. Some, understanding the words not so much of the Apostles and the preachers of God's Word, as of its hearers in general, say our Redeemer's object is, to inculcate, by a new illustration, the same thing conveyed in the preceding parable of the sower, viz., the necessity of bringing forth due fruit, after hearing the Word of God. The Word of God is not only a seed, it is also a light to guide our steps, and point out what we are to do, and what to avoid, thus to enable us to bring forth the fruit of good works in proper measure, by the aid of Divine grace, which it teaches us to ask from the Great Source of light and strength. These explain the words of v. 22, as containing a reason why they should correspond with the light, and produce the works of light; because, in the truths contained in God's Word, there is nothing hidden which is not to shine forth. Nor is there anything prescribed by it, which should be kept hidden or private, but **rather**, it all bears to be exhibited in open light. "*Their light should so shine forth before men, as to glorify their Father, who is in heaven*." The following vv. 23, 24, 25, are also interpreted in this sense, to mean, that according to their measure of correspondence with Divine grace (v. 24), and the degree of merit they thus acquire, will be the degree of glory they will receive hereafter, or the increase of the gifts of grace and light conferred on them, even in this life. He that makes good use of the graces and gifts bestowed on him here, shall receive still more as the reward of this correspondence, "*he that hath*," &c.; whereas, those who make not good use of the gifts and graces they received, "*and he that hath not*," &c. (a man may be said *not to have* what he

turns to no account), even the graces and supernatural lights *they had*, and abused or misused, shall be taken from them. Nay, they shall be deprived of the natural gifts themselves, in punishment of their perversity, and handed over to a reprobate sense. (St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Euthymius, Maldonatus, &c.)

Others, with St. Jerome, Ven. Bede, &c., while tracing a connexion with the foregoing, understand the passage to refer to the Apostles and the future preachers of God's Word, and explain it thus: Our Lord had already told His disciples, that to them "*it was given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God*," but not "*to them that are without*" (v. 11). This He now fully explains, by saying, that while He spoke in enigmas to the incredulous Jews, He did not mean that the knowledge, given to His disciples, of the kingdom of God, in the explanation of His parable, should be kept in private, but, that rather it was to be like a candle, giving light to all in the house, and that they should, one day, proclaim His truths aloud, so as to reach all who were in the house, that is, the Holy Church of God. The words of v. 21, "*And He said to them*," viz., the disciples, would add great probability to this latter interpretation. In St. Matthew (xiii. 52), our Lord would seem to treat of the same argument as in these verses, only that in St. Matthew He speaks of the duty of the Evangelical workman to preach zealously and fully; here He treats of the cause or reason, viz., because they should not keep the light, of which they are depositaries, concealed from view.

22. Everything He spoke to them in private was meant to be openly manifested, and to come forth into public view. It is to the Apostles, words similar to these are addressed on several occasions, but with a different object (Matt. x. 26, 27).

23. As destined one day to be the heralds of God's truth, they should pay the greatest attention, so as fully to understand and comprehend what He spoke to them.

24. "*To them*," i.e., the disciples, as is clear from Luke (viii. 18). The disciples should take care how they acquire a proper knowledge of the things which they are to preach to others hereafter. Hence, in Luke (viii. 18) He says, "*therefore, take heed how you hear*," implying, that as they are to make known what they learned from Him in private, they should consider the duty imposed upon them to understand Him, so as to discharge this duty well, which is followed by an abundant reward, if well discharged; and by punishment and withdrawal of graces, if neglected, or performed carelessly and unprofitably (Luke viii. 18). Here, St. Mark conveys, that in proportion to the degree and measure of zeal displayed by them in preaching the Gospel, will be their measure of merit and reward. If they show zeal, a diligence and energy in preaching His doctrine, "*in declaring all the counsel of God*" (Acts xx. 27), they shall receive an exceeding great reward; if, on the other hand, slothful or indifferent, they shall be punished, "*qui parce seminat, parce et metet*."

Some expositors understand this verse (24) not of the zealous preaching of God's Word (as above) but of zealous correspondence with God's grace, of labour and attention in acquiring an accurate knowledge of God's will and of revealed and heavenly truth. Such men will merit to have still greater knowledge and light imparted to them. On the other hand, if they fail to correspond, the graces which they had shall be taken away from them.

25. The latter interpretation accords well with the meaning of the proverb expressed in this verse, "*that hath*," uses it, turns it to good account—to him greater

gifts shall be given, if we understand it of the preachers of God's Word—then to such a suitable reward shall be given. But, as regards him "*that hath not,*" who makes no use of it, and has it, as if he had it not; then, the lights and graces he abuses or turns to no account, shall be taken from him; he shall be delivered up to a reprobate sense, and his foolish heart hardened. If understood of preaching, as most likely it ought; then, the words mean, the man who zealously and abundantly preaches God's Word, shall be blessed with still greater knowledge of Divine truth.

26. This parable is found in St. Mark only. Its scope or object is, to show the mode in which the Apostolical preaching fructifies, and also to convey, that where the preacher of the Gospel scatters the seed, he does his part. He has only to plant and water; from God comes the fruit or increase. He should not, therefore, take vain, foolish complacency in the success of his work; nor feel downcast or displeased should the seed he zealously committed to the earth, the Word of God which he zealously preached, not fructify in the hearts of his people. He has done his part by disseminating the Word, and zealously guarding it in the hearts of man; the rest is God's, whose grace operates unseen and unfelt, and who rewards not according to the fruit—which is not ours—but according to the labour.

"*The kingdom of God,*" the Church militant.

27. "*Should sleep and rise, day and night,*" refers to the man who cast the seed. The word, "*sleep,*" refers to night; and, "*rise,*" to day, as if He said, "*should sleep by night, and rise by day,*" which means, that, after committing the seed to the earth, he attends to the other ordinary concerns of life, without any further concern about the seed, or busying himself about it. The words, "*sleep and rise,*" convey the idea of unconcern, ease, and security. This, in its application, does not imply, that after preaching the Word of God, the minister of the Gospel is not to watch carefully, lest the enemy should sow errors, and pluck the good seed. For, every part of the parable cannot be applied to the seemingly corresponding parts of the subject illustrated. It only conveys, that it is not to the exertions of the sower, the growth and fructification of the seed is owing, but to the power of nature fertilizing the earth, through the rains and dews of heaven. Moreover, the parable only expresses what ordinarily happens. There may be exceptions. As in the natural order, the seed must sometimes be watered by the husbandman, if the land be dry or sterile, so, also in regard to the subject of illustration, the preacher must sometimes look after the seed, and irrigate and tend the soil, when necessary. The interpretation which understands the words, "*should sleep and rise, night and day,*" of the seed which advances to maturity unobserved and unheeded, seems improbable. The Greek word, *εγχεραι*, could hardly apply to seed; *αναβαινει*, would be the proper word as applied to seed (as in verse 8). If the man who sowed the seed, be understood to refer to God; then, the application of the words, "*sleep and rise,*" need not be anxiously sought for. They might be regarded as merely ornamental in that case.

28. "*The earth of itself bringeth forth fruit.*" In this it is conveyed, that it is not to the exertions or labour of the sower the fruit is due, but to the natural producing powers of the soil, irrigated by the refreshing rains and dews of heaven; nor will the Word of God produce fruit in the hearers, unless their hearts are irrigated by God's grace, nor should the preachers glory in their work. The fruit is God's grace, wholly independent of any concern they may afterwards take about the progress of the seed.

The words, "*blade,*" "*ear,*" "*full corn,*" shows the order and progressive

advancement which the hearers of God's Holy Word makes, aided by God's grace, towards the summit of Christian perfection.

29. "*The fruit is brought forth.*" When the fruit is fully mature, and its harvest ripeness arrived—which seems to be the meaning of the Greek, παραδω ὁ καρπός. This may be taken in a reflective sense, with εαυτον, "*cum se produxerit fructus*"—the pre-disposed fruit of the bliss of heaven.

This may refer to each of the elect at death, or to the General Judgment and final end of all things, when God will gather the good fruit into His granaries.

"*Immediately he putteth in the sickle,*" refers to the sower of the seed, or Almighty God, when, by death, He shall close the life of His elect. He who scattered the seed of His heavenly word into the earth, through His preachers, shall mow down, through the ministry of His Angels.

30. (See Matt. xiii. 31, 32). The Church militant, or Gospel preaching. "*The kingdom of heaven.*" The Church is so designated, because it is the threshold of God's heavenly kingdom, and prepares the way for it; and to reside in the Church of Christ, and under the Gospel precept, is, in some measure, to reign.

31. "*Is less than all the seeds that are in the earth.*" Although there are some seeds smaller than the "*mustard seed,*" the words of our Lord are verified according to the usual forms of expression employed by men, who, in speaking of what is small, called it the *least*, or a *very small* thing. It may also be said that the word, *all*, does not include everything of a species without exception. It is taken in a merely universal sense, as "*omnes declinaverunt*" (Psa. xiii.); "*omnes quotquot venerunt fures sunt*" (John x. 8). The strict meaning of *all* need not be urged in interpreting the passage. Cajetan interprets it: It was the least of all the seeds known in Judea at the time—ἐπε της γης—of Judea. The quantity and kind of different seeds in different countries vary.

TEXT.

33. *And with many such parables, he spoke to them the word, according as they were able to hear.*

34. *And without parable he did not speak unto them; but apart, he explained all things to his disciples.*

35. *And he saith to them that day, when evening was come: Let us pass over to the other side.*

36. *And sending away the multitude, they take him even as he was in the ship: and there were other ships with him.*

37. *And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that the ship was filled.*

38. *And he was in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow; and they awake him, and say to him: Master, doth it not concern thee that we perish?*

39. *And rising up he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased; and there was made a great calm.*

40. *And he said to them: Why are you fearful? have you not faith yet? And they feared exceedingly: and they said one to another: Who is this (thinkest thou) that both wind and sea obey him?*

COMMENTARY.

33. "*To them,*" i.e., the multitude. For, in verse 34 He distinguishes them from His disciples, to whom He explained the parables "*apart.*"

"*With many such parables.*" In this St. Mark insinuates that he did not record all the parables spoken by our Divine Redeemer on this occasion. For, St. Matthew (xiii.) records more than Mark or Luke; and possibly, Matthew himself, who is more diffuse, may have omitted some of the parables spoken by our Redeemer, and may not have recorded them all. For, St. John tells us that if all our Lord had done were written in detail, "*the world itself would not contain the books that should be written*" (John xxi. 25).

"*According as they were able to hear,*" is understood by some to mean, that our Lord, in the use of parables, drew His illustrations from things common and well-known to them, thus accommodating Himself to their capacity, so that, by understanding the subject matter of the parable, they might be stimulated to consider further the heavenly truths contained under them. Others give the words an opposite meaning—as they were able, *i.e.*, worthy to hear. He spoke to the crowds in parables, *i.e.*, obscurely and enigmatically, in punishment of their obstinate unbelief, lest, seeing they might see, or hearing they might understand. The words of next verse, "*He explained all things to His disciples,*" implying, that the things spoken *were not understood* till they were explained, would render this latter interpretation probable. As their pride and ingratitude rendered them incapable of hearing in a salutary way the truths He announced, He employed language suited to their dispositions, which rendered them unworthy of being clearly instructed, as the Apostles were, or of being blessed with the intelligence of the things spoken to them—a terrible punishment of past unbelief.

34. "*And without parables,*" &c. The meaning of the words is to be restricted to the present and other like occasions, when our Lord spoke to the multitude of the kingdom, and the institution of His Church. He then spoke in parables. But, at other times, He spoke many things plainly, as, for instance, when speaking on subjects of morals, as may be seen from the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. v., vi., vii.)

"*All things apart to His disciples.*" This, too, is to be understood restrictively. He explained obscure things about which they questioned Him. The Greek words, *επελυε παντα*, mean, *he solved everything* (obscure). From the words of St. Mark in these two verses, it seems clear, that from verse 26 to 34, should, in order of time, be placed between verses 2-10.

36. "*Sending away the multitude,*" *i.e.*, leaving them on the shore, where they heard our Redeemer addressing them out of the boat, as from a pulpit (v. 1).

"*They take Him.*" The disciples and sailors carry Him off without any delay, or without being under the necessity of taking Him into the ship. "*Even as He was in the ship,*" indicates His immediate departure, without disembarking or going on shore. Remaining as He was, instructing the multitude, He at once sets sail, without any preparation whatsoever.

"*And there were other ships with Him.*" The Greek, *μετ' αὐτοῦ*, may mean, *with his* (ship), so that more than the disciples were witnesses of the following miracle of calming the tempest.

37. (See Matt. viii. 24-27).

39. "*Peace, be still.*" The use of these almost synonymous terms, adds great force to the command, and indicates the great power and dignity displayed on the occasion.

CHAPTER V.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, St. Mark describes the cure by our Lord of a wretched demoniac who was possessed by a whole troop of devils, who after their expulsion are permitted to take possession of a herd of swine, that were carried headlong and stifled in the sea (1-20). The Evangelist next describes the cure of a woman who had been a long time afflicted with an issue of blood, and the resuscitation of the Ruler's daughter (21-43).

TEXT.

AND they came over the strait of the sea into the country of the Gerasens.

2. *And as he went out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the monuments a man with an unclean spirit,*

3. *Who had his dwelling in the tombs, and no man now could bind him, not even with chains.*

4. *For having been often bound with fetters and chains, he had burst the chains, and broken the fetters in pieces, and no man could tame him.*

5. *And he was always day and night in the monuments and in the mountains, crying and cutting himself with stones.*

6. *And seeing Jesus afar off, he ran and adored him.*

7. *And crying with a loud voice, he said : What have I to do with thee, Jesus the Son of the most high God ? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.*

8. *For he said unto him : Go out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*

9. *And he asked him : What is thy name ? And he saith to him : My name is Legion, for we are many.*

10. *And he besought him much, that he would not drive him away out of the country.*

11. *And there was there near the mountain a great herd of swine, feeding.*

12. *And the spirits besought him, saying : Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.*

13. *And Jesus immediately gave them leave. And the unclean spirits going out, entered into the swine : and the herd with great violence was carried headlong into the sea, being about two thousand, and were stifled in the sea.*

14. *And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city and in the fields. And they went out to see what was done :*

15. *And they come to Jesus, and they see him that was troubled with the devil, sitting, clothed, and well in his wits, and they were afraid.*

16. *And they that had seen it, told them, in what manner he had been dealt with who had the devil ; and concerning the swine.*

17. *And they began to pray him that he would depart from their coasts.*

18. *And when he went up into the ship, he that had been troubled with the devil, began to beseech him that he might be with him.*

19. *And he admitted him not, but saith to him : Go into thy house to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee.*

20. *And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him : and all men wondered.*

COMMENTARY.

1. (See Matt. viii. 28-34.)

2. Some commentators, among them Patrizzi, reconcile the account given by Matthew, who says there were two demoniacs, with that given by Mark here and

Luke (viii. 27), by saying, that *one* of them—the fiercest—regarding whom more particulars are recorded by St. Mark, than are recorded by Matthew regarding the two, met our Lord immediately on disembarking; and that the second, regarding whom Mark and Luke are silent, met Him afterwards.

6. The condition of this wretched man, as described here, and his mode of acting towards our Lord, shows the utter folly of Rationalists, who confound demoniac possessions, recorded in the New Testament, with mere natural diseases. In that supposition, what would be the meaning of this man running to our Lord? Was it to cure him of some natural disease? If so, why ask Him not to torment him? (v. 7). Why did he adore Him? Why address Him as "*Jesus, the Son of the most high God?*" Who told him so? Was it the disease, from which he suffered? Why beg of Him "*not to torment him?*" What signs did our Lord give that He meant to do so? Who, therefore, feared to be tormented? Who spoke thus? Is it not plain that the wretched man uttered not his own sentiments, but those of the spirit that acted on him, whom our Lord commanded to leave the body of the man possessed (v. 8).—Patrizzi.

"*Adored Him,*" as God. This is the meaning of *προσκυνεῖν*, in the New Testament. Next verse he proclaims Him, "*the Son of the most high God,*" entitled as such, to the worship paid Him. (See Matthew ii. 11. Commentary on.)

7, 8. (See Matt. viii. 28-34.)

9. "*Asked him,*" no doubt, the evil spirit, "*thy name?*" This question our Lord put, in order to make known to the bystanders, from the answer which He knew would be given, the great number of unclean spirits who had taken possession of this wretched man, who had suffered so much, and the mighty power displayed in the miracle of their expulsion. Our Lord asked his name, not that each spirit has a peculiar name, although some Angels, from certain qualities which they display, have a particular name, such as *Gabriel—the power of God*; *Michael—who is like unto God*. Our Lord by the question, only meant to elicit the declaration regarding the vast number of wicked spirits that had taken possession of this wretched man.

"*My name is Legion, for we are many,*" who have entered into him. The Jews, then subject to the Romans, adopted many terms in use among the Romans, with whom the word, legion, denoted 6000 soldiers; and the devil uses this word, which designated a definite number, to denote a large but indefinite number of demons. "*Because we are many.*" The word means, that a large troop of demons (this is the meaning of the word, "*legion*"), had taken possession of this wretched man. The demon also uses the word, "*legio,*" in imitation of God, who is called the Lord of armies, whom all the hosts of heaven serve and obey, to convey that the wicked angels always carry on their fiendish war against us. Hence, as there were so many demons present, the words, *demon, wicked spirit*, is taken collectively, to denote the entire troop of demons, who possessed the wretched man.

10-17. (See Matt. viii. 30-34.)

It is hard to see how the Rationalists can reconcile the repeated entreaties and the sending of troops of loquacious demons into herds of swine, with their ideas of mere natural ailments, unconnected with the supernatural, affecting this man and several others cured by our Blessed Lord.

15. After the words, "*of sound mind*," the Greek has, "*him who had the legion*," which, although nearly synonymous with, "*troubled with the devil*," is still expressive of greater emphasis. The words are omitted in the Vulgate.

18. The earnest entreaties of this man to be allowed to accompany our Lord, while the unbelieving Gerasens wished him to leave, shows how perfectly he was cured. He was, probably, influenced by a feeling of gratitude; and he might be afraid of falling again under the power of the demon.

19. Our Lord wished him to stay behind, in order to show that His power would protect him, and also that he might serve as a herald of Divine grace, as a living witness of God's power among Pagans, especially the wretched Gerasens, who would not have Himself among them; thus proving His benignity and long-suffering towards sinners.

"*How great things the Lord hath done for thee.*" Our Redeemer referred all the glory of the miracle to God alone.

20. "*And all men wondered.*" This was the fruit of the preaching of this man, an incipient fruit of grace, intended by our Lord when leaving him among them.

"*Decapolis.*" This name was given to ten cities almost all beyond the Jordan, among which was Gadara, and also Gerasa.

TEXT.

21. *And when Jesus had passed again in the ship over the strait, a great multitude assembled together unto him, and he was nigh unto the sea.*

22. *And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue named Jairus: and seeing him, falleth down at his feet.*

23. *And he besought him much, saying: My daughter is at the point of death, come, lay thy hand upon her, that she may be safe, and may live.*

24. *And he went with him, and a great multitude followed him, and they thronged*

25. *And a woman who was under an issue of blood twelve years,*

26. *And had suffered many things from many physicians: and had spent all that she had, and was nothing the better, but rather worse,*

27. *When she had heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him, and touched his garment.*

28. *For she said: If I shall but touch his garment, I shall be whole.*

29. *And forthwith the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the evil.*

30. *And immediately Jesus, knowing in himself the virtue that had proceeded from him, turning to the multitude, said: Who hath touched my garments?*

31. *And his disciples said to him: Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who hath touched me?*

32. *And he looked about to see her who had done this.*

33. *But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.*

34. *And he said to her: Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease.*

35. *While he was yet speaking, some come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying: Thy daughter is dead: why dost thou trouble the master any farther?*

36. *But Jesus having heard the word that was spoken, saith to the ruler of the synagogue: Fear not, only believe.*

37. *And he admitted not any man to follow him, but Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.*

38. *And they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and he seeth a tumult, and people weeping and wailing much.*

39. *And going in, he saith to them: Why make you this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead but sleepeth.*

40. *And they laughed him to scorn. But he having put them all out, taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.*

41. *And taking the damsel by the hand, he saith to her: Tabitha cumi, which is, being interpreted: damsel (I say to thee) arise.*

42. *And immediately the damsel rose up, and walked: and she was twelve years old: and they were astonished with a great astonishment.*

43. *And he charged them strictly that no man should know it: and commanded that something should be given her to eat.*

COMMENTARY.

21. "*Over the strait*," across to Capharnaum. For, St. Luke (viii. 40) says, "*And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned the multitude received Him; for, they were all waiting for Him*," surely, waiting for Him, where He usually dwelt, viz., at Capharnaum.

22. "*One of the rulers*," or presiding officers, "*of the synagogue*." Very likely, in each synagogue there was not only a president, but other officers also, consisting of the most respectable members, who bore the title of chiefs of the synagogue, either because they discharged the duties and exercised the office of president, or occasionally discharged the duties of their office, which consisted in preserving due decorum and choosing and inviting those who were to address the congregation. (See Acts xiii.) —Bloomfield.

The order of events, as narrated by St. Matthew is the more probable one (see Matt. ix. 2). The cure of the ruler's daughter occurred not immediately on our Lord's return, as would seem to be stated here by St. Mark and St. Luke, but afterwards, while He was in the act of refuting the calumnies of the Pharisees (see Matt., *ibidem*).

22 4b. (See Matt. ix. 18-26.)

36. "*Only believe*," has reference merely to the performance of the miracle, without which faith He will not perform any miracle (vi. 5). There is no reference whatever to *justification*.

41. "*Damsel (I say to thee) arise*." The words ("*I say to thee*"), are not included in the words of our Redeemer, "*Tabitha cumi*," but were added by the Evangelist himself, for the greater expression of the authority of the words of our Lord, or perhaps, to express the tone in which these words were uttered by Him.

30. "*Knowing in Himself the virtue that proceeded from Him*." The words clearly indicate that our Lord's power of working miracles was *inherent* in Him, in virtue of

His Divine nature, and not *adventitious*, or derived elsewhere, as in the case of the Prophets and Apostles. The words, "*virtue that proceeded from Him*," mean, that the inherent and intrinsic power of working miracles which was in Him had gone out from Him, by the performance of the cure wrought in the infirm woman.

43. (See Matt. ix. 26). Our Lord, when He performed miracles among the Jews, endeavoured, as much as possible, to conceal it for a time; not permanently, but only until the appointed period of His manifestation would come, and enjoined on others to do so. Among the Pagans (v. 19), He told the man cured to proclaim it aloud; thus, in the former case, teaching us to avoid every occasion of praise and celebrity, unless when the glory and worship of God demanded the contrary, as in the latter case.

CHAPTER VI.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, St. Mark records our Lord's visit to His own country, Nazareth—the admiration of His countrymen at His learning and miracles—their obstinate incredulity, on which account He performed very few miracles among them (1-6). The mission of the twelve Apostles; the instructions given them; their miracles and successes (7-13). The history and circumstances of the Baptist's imprisonment and death, and the causes that led thereto (14-30). The miraculous multiplication of bread, after our Lord and His disciples had retired a little to rest from their labours (31-45). The stilling of a storm at sea (45-51), after which, on landing, our Lord performs several miraculous cures (53-56).

TEXT.

AND going out from thence, he went into his own country; and his disciples followed him.

2. *And when the sabbath was come he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were in admiration at his doctrine, saying: How came this man by all these things? and what wisdom is this that is given to him, and such mighty works as are wrought by his hands?*

3. *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? are not also his sisters here with us? And they were scandalized in regard of him.*

4. *And Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred.*

5. *And he could not do any miracles there, only that he cured a few that were sick, laying his hands upon them.*

6. *And he wondered because of their unbelief, and he went through the villages round about teaching.*

7. *And he called the twelve; and began to send them two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits.*

8. *And he commanded them that they should take nothing for the way, but a staff only: no scrip, no bread, nor money in their purse.*

9. *But to be shod with sandals, and that they should not put on two coats.*

10. *And he said to them: Wheresoever you shall enter into a house, there abide till you depart from that place.*

11. *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you; going forth from thence, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony to them.*

12. *And going forth they preached that men should do penance:*

13. *And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

14. *And king Herod heard: (for his name was made manifest) and he said: John the Baptist is risen again from the dead, and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him.*

15. *And others said: It is Elias. But others said: It is a prophet, as one of the prophets.*

16. *Which Herod hearing, said: John whom I beheaded, he is risen again from the dead.*

17. *For Herod himself had sent and apprehended John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother, because he had married her.*

18. *For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.*

19. *Now Herodias laid snares for him: and was desirous to put him to death and could not.*

20. *For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man; and kept him, and when he heard him did many things: and he heard him willingly.*

21. *And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birth-day, for the princes, and tribunes, and chief men of Galilee.*

22. *And when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in, and had danced, and pleased Herod, and them that were at table with him, the king said to the damsel: Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee.*

23. *And he swore to her: Whatsoever thou shalt ask I will give thee, though it be the half of my kingdom.*

24. *Who when she was gone out, said to her mother, What shall I ask: But she said: The head of John the Baptist.*

25. *And when she was come in immediately with haste to the king, she asked, saying: I will that thou forthwith give me in a dish, the head of John the Baptist.*

26. *And the king was struck sad. Yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her:*

27. *But sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish.*

28. *And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish: and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother.*

29. *Which his disciples hearing, came, and took his body; and laid it in a tomb.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "From thence," the house of the ruler, which was likely in Capharnaum (see c. v. 21).

"His own country," Nazareth, where He was brought up, and which He left about eleven months before (Calmet). Commentators infer, from a comparison of the Gospels, that the events recorded here between this verse and verse 16, occurred in the first month of the year 28 of our era (Patrizzi). This visit of our Lord to His native place is supposed to be the same as that which St. Luke records by anticipation (c. iv.) He came there, although he foresaw that no fruit would result, in order to deprive them of all excuse and grounds of complaint, that if they were not converted, it was because, they were not favoured with His visits, who overlooking His own, preached everywhere else.

2. "In admiration." The Greek—*ἐξέπλησσαντο*—means, *astounded*.

"How came this man by all these things?" ("All" is not in the Greek.) How did such talents fall to the lot of this man, and of what kind is this wisdom, which has been given Him from above?

"And such mighty works are wrought by His hands." The Greek in some versions is

ὅτι καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τοιαῦται, &c., so as to mean, "so that such works of power *also* are wrought by His hands," "*also*" conveying, that He did not merely teach them, but worked miracles too. Even in the Greek versions, which omit ὅτι—such as the Vatican—the meaning of καὶ, may be "*also*," and the sentence the same as in the other Greek reading.

"*Wisdom*," was employed by the Hebrews, to denote knowledge, prudence, skill, &c. Our Redeemer's eloquence and power excited the envy of His countrymen.

3. (See Matt. xiii. 55-58.)

5. "*He could not do any mighty work*," &c. Not for want of power—for, He possessed sovereign power to perform all kinds of miracles *when* and *where* He pleased—but for want of faith in the people, who, owing to their pride and jealousy, would not be the recipients of His heavenly favours—He *would not* (see Matt. xiii. 58).

"*Could not*," strongly expresses their unworthiness and unbelief, which, as it were, paralysed the powerful arm of God. It is also usual with men to say, we *cannot* do a thing, *when they are averse* to doing it.

6. "*He wondered*." Although He knew all beforehand, still, He expressed wonder, to call attention to their obstinate incredulity, and to convey to us, that it was a subject of astonishment, that they should reject Him on such trivial grounds, considering all they heard of Him, and all they themselves witnessed.

Some commentators, among them Maldonatus, say, the words, "*because of their unbelief*," should be connected, not with the words, "*and He wondered*;" but, with the preceding words, "*and He could not do any mighty work there . . . because of their unbelief*," which would be very like what is stated by St. Matthew (xiii. 58). These enclose, "*and He wondered*," within a parenthesis ("*and He therefore, wondered*"). The Greek words, *δια την απιστιαν*, favours this; for, if the Evangelist meant to say, that He wondered at their unbelief, he would have omitted *δια*, and have written *εθαρμασε την απιστιαν*.

By some the account given here by St. Mark is reconciled with that given by St. Luke (iv. 22), "*And all gave testimony to Him; and they wondered at the words of grace*," &c., by saying, that at *first*, after hearing Him, *most* of them—which "*all*" signifies—thought favourably of Him; and that the words, "*Is not this the carpenter?*" &c., were uttered by them in commendation of His wonderful gifts; but that some others thought differently, were scandalized at His humble origin; envied His wonderful attainments, and uttered the words, "*Is not this the carpenter?*" in a sneering, scornful spirit; and that these latter brought over the others to their way of thinking, and finally were filled with rage and indignation (Luke iv. 28, 29).—Jansen. Gandav.

Maldonatus and others say, that the testimony they rendered to Him (as in St. Luke), regarded science, eloquence, learning, but not the testimony of faith in Him, as the promised Messiah.

Others, with Patrizzi (*in hunc locum*), say, the two Evangelists refer to different occurrences; that what St. Luke records, took place a year before that recorded here by St. Mark.

"*The villages round about*," within the confines of Galilee.

7. "*He called the twelve*," whom He had before chosen out of the multitude of His disciples to be His Apostles (Matt. x. 1.), &c. "*And began to send them*," to preach the Gospel within the confines of Galilee, and to precede Himself in the places where He meant to preach.

12. Very likely, as they preached penance, so they also preached the near approach of "*the kingdom of heaven*," the theme suggested to them by our Lord (Matt. x. 7). St. Luke (ix. 2) also informs us, that, "*He sent them to preach the kingdom of God*," for which penance was a preparation. Similar was the theme of the Baptist's preaching (Matt. iii. 2).

13. "*Anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*" Some commentators (Ven. Bede, Franciscus Lucas, Maldonatus), &c., are of opinion, that here mention is made of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, the same as in St. James (c. v.) But, the opinion generally adopted is, that, although this anointing clearly typified and prefigured the anointing with oil mentioned by St. James, still, it is not the same—1st. Because it does not appear that this anointing produced any other effect than bodily cures. 2ndly. It is not confined to the sick who were baptized, it refers to numerous sick—"many that were sick"—indiscriminately, many of whom, at this time, most likely, had not received Baptism, and only the baptized can receive Extreme Unction. 3rdly. The Apostles were not yet Priests, being ordained such only at the Last Supper (Council of Trent), and, unlike Baptism, which can be always validly, though not always licitly, conferred by a laic, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction can be conferred validly only by a Priest, "*inducat Presbyteros Ecclesiae.*" Finally, the Council of Trent says (SS. xiv. c. 1), this "Sacrament was *insinuated* by St. Mark, but *promulgated* and commended to the faithful by James the Apostle." The word, "*insinuated*," conveys, that it was only obscurely signified and prefigured.

This anointing with oil, which miraculously cured every description of sick persons, through the supernatural powers given to the Apostles by our Lord, and not through the natural effect of the anointing, was a clear type and figure of that other anointing, which, by the same power and institution of God, was to confer spiritual strength on the soul, and to fortify and animate it to resist the redoubled assaults of the powers of hell at the decisive moment of our departure from this world. In the same way as the imposition of hands, the saliva, and other external ceremonies employed by our Lord Himself, in the miraculous cures He effected, were employed by the Church, under the guidance of God's Spirit, in the administration of the Sacraments, was it meant by Him that she would employ, in the administration of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, this anointing with oil, which He wished His Apostles to employ in the supernatural cure of the sick, in a manner proportioned to their weakness. That the cures referred to in this verse (13) were supernatural, performed in virtue of the healing power supernaturally given by our Lord to His Apostles, and not the natural result of the healing properties of oil, is clear from the whole context, where there is question of miraculous powers given by our Lord to His Apostles, such as casting out demons, &c., in order to prove their Divine mission, and confirm the truth of their doctrines. Another Evangelist (St. Matthew xi.) says, "*He gave them power to cure all manner of diseases and infirmities.*" And, although they might have cured by the sole Word of God, as they often did, still here He wishes them to use oil, as an emblem of that "*oil of gladness with which He was anointed above His fellows*," and which was to be plenteously bestowed in another rite, Extreme Unction, whereof this ceremony mentioned here was a type and figure, "*apud Marcum quidem insinuatum*," i.e., signified by Mark (Con. Trid. xiv. 1).

14-30. (See Matt. xiv. 1-12.)

18. "*It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.*" (Lev. xviii. 16).

Although this Herodias was niece of Philip, her husband, as well as of Herod Antipas, with whom she lived in adultery, this relationship was not an impediment to her marriage with Philip, nor is it anywhere reckoned among marriage impediments in the Jewish law. Hence, she is called by John the Baptist, "*thy brother's wife*."

20. "*Fear'd*," is interpreted by many to mean, revered, stood in reverential awe of him, on being apprised of his virtues. Although, in the first instance, he may have been animated with feelings quite different, when he cast him into prison.

"*And kept him*," guarded him against the violence and snares of Herodias.

"*And did many things*," conformably to the counsels given by John.

21. "*A convenient day*," i.e., a festal day, convenient for Herodias' wicked designs against the Baptist—a convenient day to work on the feelings of Herod.

22-29. (See Matthew xiv. 4-12.)

TEXT.

30. *And the apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to him all things that they had done and taught.*

31. *And He said to them: Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little. For there were many coming and going: and they had not so much as time to eat.*

32. *And going up into a ship, they went into a desert place apart.*

33. *And they saw them going away, and many knew: and they ran flocking thither on foot from all the cities, and were there before them.*

34. *And Jesus going out saw a great multitude; and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things.*

35. *And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came to him, saying: This is a desert place, and the hour is now past:*

36. *Send them away, that going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves meat to eat.*

37. *And he answering said to them: Give you them to eat. And they said to him: Let us go and buy bread for two hundred pence, and we will give them to eat.*

38. *And he saith to them: How many loaves have you? go and see. And when they knew, they say: Five, and two fishes.*

39. *And he commanded them that they should make them all sit down by companies upon the green grass.*

40. *And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.*

41. *And when he had taken the five loaves, and the two fishes: looking up to heaven, he blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave to his disciples to set before them: and the two fishes he divided among them all.*

42. *And they all did eat, and had their fill.*

43. *And they took up the leavings, twelve full baskets of fragments, and of the fishes.*

44. *And they that did eat, were five thousand men.*

45. *And immediately he obliged his disciples to go up into the ship, that they might go before him over the water to Bethsaida, whilst he dismissed the people.*

46. *And when he had dismissed them, he went up to the mountain to pray.*

47. *And when it was late, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and himself alone on the land.*

48. *And seeing them labouring in rowing (for the wind was against them) and about the*

fourth watch of the night he cometh to them walking upon the sea, and he would have passed by them.

49. *But they seeing him walking upon the sea, thought it was an apparition, and they cried out.*

50. *For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he spoke with them, and said to them: Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not.*

51. *And he went up to them into the ship, and the wind ceased: and they were far more astonished within themselves.*

52. *For they understood not concerning the loaves; for their heart was blinded.*

53. *And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Genesareth, and set to the shore.*

54. *And when they were gone out of the ship, immediately they knew him.*

55. *And running through that whole country, they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.*

56. *And whithersoever he entered, into towns or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.*

COMMENTARY.

30. “*Coming together unto Jesus.*” They had been with Him before they went out to preach and perform miracles. Probably, our Lord fixed a time for them to return and give Him an account of their mission. He, probably, thus wisely ordained it, for the instruction of all future ministers of the Gospel, who, in all their successes, should give all the glory to God, and lay their labours at the feet of Jesus, from whom alone all success and increase can come, either in the order of nature or of grace.

31. Our Redeemer, knowing the weakness of His Apostles, before the Spirit of truth and strength had descended on them in His fulness—like “*the eagle, who hovers over his young, and provokes them to fly*” (Deut. xxxii. 11), and, until they can fly, retains them in the nest—wishes in retirement to teach them how to comport themselves in their missionary labours, and fly upwards to Him to obtain fortitude and heavenly strength, and to learn how far they fell short of the perfection and purity of intention required in the discharge of their exalted functions. Such is the model set before all ministers of the Gospel, when they periodically devote some time to spiritual retreat, to refresh their souls and resuscitate the first fervour and grace of their vocation.

32, 33. (See Matt. xiv. 13, 14.)

34. “*Going out.*” From what place? Most likely, from the boat. The people, who probably crossed the Jordan, or forded it, while He went round one of the promontories at the upper or northern end of the lake, where Bethsaida of Gaulonitis was situated “*were there before them,*” v. 33 (see Matt. xiv. 14; also, Luke ix. 10-12).

36-44. (See Matt. xiv. 15-21.)

45-51. (See Matt. xiv. 22-32.)

52. “*For they understood not concerning the loaves.*” Had the Apostles reflected on

the miracle lately performed, of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves, which was a greater miracle than that connected with the appeasing of the storm, and contained an undoubted proof of our Lord's Divine power, they would not have been in the least astonished at the one they just witnessed. Likely, they were more affected by the latter miracle, which rescued them from a watery grave; because, men are more apt to be affected by adversity than by prosperity, and more affected by what concerns themselves, as in the latter case, than what regards others, as in the case of the former miracle.

"*Because their heart was blinded.*" The constant intercourse with our Lord, clad in human flesh, prevented them often from raising their minds to the consideration of His Divinity. We ourselves, who witness far greater wonders performed by our Divine Lord, not in His mortal, infirm state, but "*now sitting in glory at the right hand of the Father,*" in sustaining His Church with the bread of life miraculously multiplied throughout the earth; in quelling the storms which, at all periods, furiously assailed the bark of Peter, are far from having a vivid feeling of gratitude for these wonders, which are greater than those which struck the eyes of the Apostles, and this owing to our "*blindness of heart,*" the same with which Moses of old menaced the Israelites (Deut. xxviii. 28, 29; see Matt. xiv. 33).

53-56. (See Matt. xiv. 34-36.)

CHAPTER VII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of the charge made by the Pharisees, &c., against our Lord's disciples, for neglecting certain Jewish ceremonies pertaining to legal ablutions, and His refutation of them (1-13). Also a full explanation by our Lord of the nature of real interior purity, and whence it proceeds (14-23). The cure of the daughter of the Chanaanite woman (24-30). The cure of a man who was deaf and dumb (31-37).

TEXT.

AND there assembled together unto him the Pharisees and some of the scribes, coming from Jerusalem.

2. And when they had seen some of his disciples eat bread with common, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.

3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews eat not without often washing their hands, holding the tradition of the ancients:

4. And when they come from the market, unless they be washed, they eat not; and many other things there are that have been delivered to them to observe, the washings of cups and of pots, and of brazen vessels, and of beds.

5. And the Pharisees and scribes asked him: Why do not thy disciples walk according to the tradition of the ancients, but they eat bread with common hands?

6. But he answering, said to them: Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, hypocrites, as it is written: "*This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*"

7. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men."

8. For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washings of pots and of cups: and many other things you do like to these.

9. And he said to them: Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.

10. For Moses said: "*Honour thy father and thy mother;*" and "*He that shall curse father or mother, dying let him die.*"

11. *But you say: If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban (which is a gift) whatsoever is from me, shall profit thee:*

12. *And farther you suffer him not to do anything for his father or mother.*

13. *Making void the word of God by your own tradition, which you have given forth. And many other such like things you do.*

14. *And calling again the multitude unto him, he said to them: Hear ye me all and understand.*

15. *There is nothing from without a man that entering into him, can defile him. But the things which come from a man, those are they that defile a man.*

16. *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*

17. *And when he was come into the house from the multitude, his disciples asked him the parable.*

18. *And he saith to them: So are you also without knowledge? understand you not that everything from without, entering into a man cannot defile him:*

19. *Because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth into the belly; and goeth out into the privy, purging all meats?*

20. *But he said that the things which come out from a man, they defile a man.*

21. *For from within out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,*

22. *Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.*

23. *All these evil things come from within, and defile a man.*

COMMENTARY.

1. (See Matt. xv.)

2. "*Common*," what the Mosaic Law commanded to be regarded as unclean, the Hellenists termed *koina*, *common*. So that the term, "*common*," came to designate anything *unclean*. St. Mark explains it, "*that is, with unwashed hands*."

3, 4. As St. Mark wrote for others besides the Jews, whenever he refers to the Jewish rites, manners, and customs, he usually adds something by way of explanation.

"*Often washing their hands*." From this it appears, they not only washed their hands before meals, which men usually do, as a matter of social propriety—and this our Redeemer did; for, He reproaches Simon, when invited to his table, "*aquam non dedisti pedibus meis*"—nor merely after meals; but frequently during meals, as a matter of religious duty, "*often washing their hands*." Hence, at the marriage feast of Cana, six large water pots, containing large quantities of water for frequent ablutions, were provided. What our Lord censures was, not the washing of hands, from motives of propriety and cleanliness, but as religious, superstitious practices.

5-13. (See Matt. xv. 2-9.)

11. "*Corban, i.e., a gift, whatsoever is from Me, shall profit thee*." The word, "*corban*," signifies a gift offered for religious, sacred purposes. It shows the nature of the tradition in question, which had for object, to encourage men to devote to religious purposes—and thus promote the avaricious views of the Pharisees—the means which should be employed in supporting and honouring their parents. The Priests, many of whom were Pharisees, taught the people, that if any one vowed

an offering to God, he should fulfil his vow, even though his parents were in extreme want and need of it. This they inculcated, not from any love for religion, or from any regard for the obligation of fulfilling one's vow to the Lord; but, to gratify their own avarice, as they received a part of the victims offered in sacrifice. This defrauding of one's father or mother was opposed to the law of God and of nature (Prov. xxviii. 24).

"*Corban*" is a form used by the Jews in oaths and vows. Josephus (Antiq. Lib. 4, c. 4), states, that those who voluntarily devoted themselves to God's service, were wont to call themselves *corban*, that is, a gift of God; and he speaks (Lib. contra Appion.), of an oath called *corban*. Hence, to say to parents asking support, *corban*, was to close their mouths, lest they should seem to be demanding back what was given to God. Patrizzi gives the passages this construction: "*Behold, or, this is a corban, or gift to God from me, whereby you would ask me to relieve or profit you.*" You can no longer demand it, as it is now devoted to God.

14. (See Matt. xv. 10.) "*Again,*" is according to the Vatican MS. and the Vulgate, &c. The ordinary Greek has, *παντα*, "*all.*"

17. "*Asked Him the parable,*" i.e., the meaning of the parable (v. 15). Hence, the word, "*parable,*" here is taken, not in the strict sense, as applied to the parables of the New Testament (Matt. xiii.), but in a general sense, as denoting an obscure or enigmatical saying (as in Psa. xlviii. 4; Psa. lxx. 2, &c.)

18-23. (See Matt. xv. 22-28.)

TEXT.

24. *And rising from thence he went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon: and entering into a house, he would that no man should know it, and he could not be hid.*

25. *For a woman as soon as she heard of him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, came in, and fell down at his feet.*

26. *For the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician born. And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.*

27. *Who said to her: Suffer first the children to be filled: for it is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs.*

28. *But she answered, and said to him: Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat under the table of the crumbs of the children.*

29. *And he said to her: For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter.*

30. *And when she was come into her house, she found the girl lying upon the bed, and that the devil was gone out.*

31. *And again going out of the coasts of Tyre, he came by Sidon to the sea of Galilee through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.*

32. *And they bring to him one deaf and dumb; and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him.*

33. *And taking him from the multitude apart, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue;*

34. *And looking up to heaven, he groaned, and said to him: Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened.*

35. *And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right.*

36. *And he charged them that they should tell no man. But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it.*

37. *And so much the more did they wonder, saying: He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.*

COMMENTARY.

24-30. (See Matt. xv. 22-28.)

31-35. (See Matt. xv. 29-31.)

32. St. Mark alone makes special mention of this miracle, which is included in those recorded in a general way by St Matthew (xv. 30).

33. Although Euthymius and Theophylact maintain that this man was possessed by a devil, it is, however, very likely he was not, as if so, St. Mark would have mentioned it.

When the Church employs, in Baptism, the ceremony here employed by our Blessed Lord, it is not for the purpose of signifying, that the devil is cast out; but, to signify that the unbaptized infant is deaf and dumb in regard to hearing and professing God's faith; and hence, he is presented by sponsors, as the man here was by his friends, otherwise he could not ask the grace of Baptism.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, we have an account of a miracle of the multiplication of bread, performed by our Lord, to satiate the cravings of the multitudes who followed Him for three days (1-9). He refuses to give the desired sign to the Pharisees, and explains some matters to His disciples, which they did not seem to have understood (10-21). He cures a blind man, after having recourse, for the purpose, to several ceremonies (22-26). After receiving the profession of faith in His Divinity from His disciples, He predicts His death, and reproves Peter, who wished to dissuade Him from submitting to it (27-33). He inculcates the necessity of carrying our cross, and professing our faith, under due circumstances, be the sacrifice it may entail what it may (34-39).

TEXT.

IN those days again when there was a great multitude, and had nothing to eat; calling his disciples together, he saith to them.

2. *I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me, three days, and have nothing to eat*

3. *And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off.*

4. *And his disciples answered him: From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?*

5. *And he asked them: How many loaves have ye? Who said: Seven.*

6. *And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks he broke, and gave to his disciples to set before them, and they set them before the people.*

7. *And they had a few little fishes; and he blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them.*

8. *And they did eat and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets.*
9. *And they that had eaten were about four thousand : and he sent them away.*
10. *And immediately going up into a ship with his disciples, he came into the part of Dalmanutha.*
11. *And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, asking him a sign from heaven, tempting him.*
12. *And sighing deeply in spirit, he saith, Why doth this generation ask a sign ? Amen I say to you, If a sign shall be given to this generation.*
13. *And leaving them, he went up again into the ship, and passed to the other side of the water.*
14. *And they forgot to take bread : and they had but one loaf with them in the ship.*
15. *And he charged them, saying : Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod.*
16. *And they reasoned among themselves, saying : Because we have no bread.*
17. *Which Jesus knowing, saith to them : Why do you reason, because you have no bread ? do you not yet know nor understand ? have you still your heart blinded ?*
18. *Having eyes see you not ? and having ears hear you not ? neither do you remember,*
19. *When I broke the five loaves among five thousand ; how many baskets full of fragments took you up ? They say to him, Twelve.*
20. *When also the seven loaves among four thousand, how many baskets of fragments took you up ? And they say to him, Seven.*
21. *And he said to them : How do you not yet understand ?*
22. *And they came to Bethsaida ; and they bring to him a blind man, and they besought him that he would touch him.*
23. *And taking the blind man by the hand he led him out of the town ; and spitting upon his eyes, laying his hands on him, he asked him if he saw any thing.*
24. *And looking up, he said : I see men as it were trees, walking.*
25. *After that again he laid his hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored, so that he saw all things clearly.*
26. *And he sent him into his house, saying : Go into thy house, and if thou enter into the town, tell nobody.*
27. *And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Casarea-Philippi ; and in the way he asked his disciples, saying to them : Whom do men say that I am ?*
28. *Who answered him, saying : John the Baptist ; but some Elias, and others as one of the prophets.*
29. *Then he saith to them : But whom do you say that I am ? Peter answering said to him : Thou art the Christ.*
30. *And he strictly charged them that they should not tell any man of him.*
31. *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the ancients and by the high-priests, and the Scribes, and be killed : and after three days rise again.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "In those days." About the time that the above miracles were performed by our Lord, while staying beyond the Lake of Tiberias, after His return from Phœnicia, the Evangelist uses this indefinite time, lest it might be imagined, that the miracle he is about recording occurred on the same day with the preceding. It occurred

three days after our Lord came back from Phœnicia (Matt. xv. 32; also verse 27. —Maldonatus.

“*Again*,” has reference to a similar miracle. (Mark vi. 35, &c.)

2-9. (See Matt. xv. 32-38.)

10. “*Dalmanutha*.” St. Matthew (xv. 39), “*the coasts of Magedan*.” There is no contradiction, as Magedan and Dalmanutha were both in the vicinity of the coast on which our Redeemer landed (see Map of Palestine; also Matt. xv. 39). It is not said, He crossed the lake, because He only passed farther on the same side of the lake, to avoid the concourse of the people.

Many Greek copies of Mark, for Dalmanutha, read *Magdala*. In the time of St. Jerome and St. Augustine, many copies had *Magedan*. But the most approved Greek copies, as also the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, read Dalmanutha in Mark, and Magedan in Matthew (xv.) This must be regarded as the true reading. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain the precise site of these places, as neither in the Old Testament, nor in Josephus, nor in ancient geographies, do we find any mention of “*Dalmanutha*.” Eusebius and St. Jerome both testify, that in their time a certain district on the eastern side of the Lake of Genesareth, near Gerasa, was called *μαγαδάρην, Magedena*. And we must hold, that Dalmanutha was situated there also. Our Redeemer, then, on His return from Sidon, crossed the Sea of Galilee, or may have come down by the upper or northern end of the lake, on His return from Sidon. There He performed the miracle (vv. 8-9). Thence, in order to avoid the concourse of the people, and arrive more quickly, He passed on farther on the same side of the lake, to Dalmanutha, or Magedan. Thence, he crossed the lake to the opposite, or western side, to Bethsaida (verse 22), and proceeded to Cæsarea-Philippi, near the source of the Jordan (Matt. xvi.; Mark viii. 27).

11. (See Matt. xvi. 1.)

“*And the Pharisees came forth*,” *i.e.*, approached Him. St. Matthew (xvi. 1) says, “*the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Him tempting*.” Here it is said, “*they began to question with Him*,” that is, to dispute with Him, “*tempting Him*.” These haughty men, who occupied a position beyond that of the common people, would fain depreciate the miracle of the multiplication of bread, just performed by Him, as containing no proof of His Divinity. They demand a sign which was not earthly; but one like the prodigies performed by Moses, who brought down manna from the skies, “*from heaven*,” as if they would not devise some means of calling all His miracles in question.

12. “*Sighing deeply in spirit*,” heaving a deep sigh from the bottom of His heart.

“*Why doth this generation ask a sign?*” whom no sign, no miracle, however brilliant, can rouse from the hardened perversity and state of infidelity in which they are hopelessly involved?

“*If a sign shall be given*,” &c. This means, shall *not* be given. The reading, “*if a sign*,” is a strong form of imprecation, met with often in SS. Scriptures, and the part corresponding with it, so as to complete the sentence, *may I not live* or some such, is, by *Aposiopesis*, left unexpressed. “*Si introibunt in requiem meam*,” “*Si David mentiar*,” “*May I not live*.” May I not be God, or the like, is left understood. Hence, it is equivalent to a strong form of negative, and rendered so in some English versions.

"*A sign.*" Such a sign as they ask, a sign from heaven, shall not be given this generation.

13-21. (See Matt. xvi. 5-12.)

22. "*Bethsaida.*" Some say, Bethsaida of Galilee, not *Gaulonitis*; because our Lord had crossed from the opposite, or eastern side of the lake (v. 13). St. Mark calls it, *κομμη*, a *small town* or *village*, which could not apply to *Bethsaida-Gaulonitis*, or *Julias*, which was then a very important place, situated at the point where the Jordan flows into the Sea of Galilee (Patrizzi). Calmet, however, understands it of Bethsaida-Gaulonitis.

"*A blind man.*" St. Mark alone records this miracle.

23. "*Out of the town,*" to give us an example of humility, and to teach us to avoid ostentation in our good actions; and, perhaps, spiritually, to convey to us, that if we wish to remove blindness of mind and heart, we must give up the tumult of the world, and the occasions of sin.

The putting spittle on his eyes, and touching them with His hands (verse 25), together with other ceremonies and words employed by our Redeemer in this case, as well as the tardy process of His cure, when, by a single word, He might at once have restored him, are all intended by our Lord for the instruction of the blind man himself, whose infirm faith may, perhaps, be the cause of the slow process observed in his cure. For, it was by others he was brought, and we have no evidence that he himself sought for the cure. It may be also meant to convey to us, that the cure of spiritual blindness is not easily effected; and that it is by degrees men pass from darkness to the full light of faith.

"*He asked him if he saw any thing.*" Our Lord needed not to be informed of the condition of this man; but, by this question, He meant to convey, that He did not mean to restore him fully at once, and that He adopted this course voluntarily, not from want of power, and that He might employ any process, whether tardy or expedite, to effect a cure, just as seemed good to Him.

24. "*I see men as it were trees, walking,*" that is, I see something obscurely and indistinctly. I see men walking; but I could not distinguish them from *trees*. The Greek, *ανθρωπους περιπατοντας*, shows the meaning to be, that he saw men walking, but that they looked like trees. This shows his vision to be still imperfect and obscure, because he could hardly discern men from trees. It would seem he was not born blind, from his distinct ideas of the relative height of men and trees.

25. Our Redeemer employs these ceremonies as an external sign of the power which acted and of the effect produced. Hence, in imitation of her Divine Founder and model, the Catholic Church employs certain external ceremonies in the conferring of Sacraments, to signify the internal virtue which operates, and the abundant infusion of sanctifying grace in the soul of the receiver.

"*He began to see.*" The Greek is, "*He made him to see.*"

26. "*And He sent him to his house,*" &c., so as not to be roving here and there, divulging the miracle. Hence, some commentators infer that it was not in the town he lived, that he was not a native of Bethsaida. The words may mean: If you enter into the town, as you may be obliged to do on your way to your own house, go

home straight to your own house, and loiter not in the streets. "*Tell nobody.*" He meant, not to publish it in the streets, or to the inhabitants of Bethsaida, who had already proved themselves unworthy of the many miracles wrought in their midst by our Redeemer, on which account He says elsewhere (Matt. xi. 21), "*Woe to thee, Bethsaida.*" He also meant, that this miracle would not be divulged before the destined time of His public manifestation to the world arrived.

"*Go into thy house,*" is not found in the Greek.

27-30. (See Matt. xvi. 13-20.)

29. Eusebius (Demonstrat. Evangel. Lib. iii., § p. 121, 122), states, that St. Mark, who was generally supposed to have written his Gospel from the dictation of St. Peter, his master, when he comes to describe the magnificent confession of Peter's faith, and the exalted dignity conferred on him in consequence, passes it over almost in silence—"Hæc sane Petrus merito tacenda indicavit, ac Petrus quidem, quæ ad ipsum ac de ipso dicta sunt ab Jesu, proprio testimonio proferre æquum non putavit, quare etiam Marcus ea præterit." Whereas, whatever tended to Peter's humiliation, such as his denial of our Lord, &c., these Mark fully describes—"Marcus quidem hæc scribit ac Petrus hæc de seipso TESTATUR: omnia, enim, quæ apud Marcum leguntur narrationum sermonumque Petri dicuntur esse Commentaria."

Grotius also asserts, that the silence of Mark regarding the promise made to Peter on this occasion, was owing to the modesty of Peter, who would not allow his disciple (Mark) to record it.

30. "*Not tell any man of Him,*" i.e., concerning His Divinity, and the public profession made of it by Peter, in which all the Apostles concurred.

31-33. (See Matt. xvi. 21-23.)

TEXT.

32. *And he spoke the word openly. And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him.*

33. *Who turning about and seeing his disciples, threatened Peter, saying: Go behind me, satan, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but that are of men.*

34. *And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

35. *For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it.*

36. *For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?*

37. *Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.*

38. *For he that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation: the Son of man will also be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

39. *And he said to them: Amen I say to you, that there are some of them that stand here, who shall not taste death, till they see the kingdom of God coming in power.*

COMMENTARY.

32. "*Openly,*" clearly, and without any enigmatical or obscure form of words.

33. "*Seeing His disciples.*" He wished them all to listen to the very sharp rebuke He was about to administer to Peter.

33-37. (See Matt. xvi. 23-26.)

35. "*And for the Gospel*," is added here by St. Mark, to show that the prescribed following of Christ involves the observance of what He prescribed, which is contained in the Gospel.

Some commentators, with Patrizzi, say, the repetition of the causal particle, "*for*" (vv. 35, 36, 38), does not signify, that each succeeding verse is proof of the assertion contained in the preceding, as "*for*" might imply; but, that in each verse is contained a new argument of the necessity of taking up our cross, denying ourselves, &c. (v. 34.)

The three great obstacles to our following Christ, and taking up our cross, are, the excessive love of life, and of its pleasures, and the aversion to suffer anything opposed to such pleasures. "*The concupiscence of the flesh*," the love of riches. "*The concupiscence of the eyes*," the desire of glory and honours. "*The pride of life*," (1 John ii. 16) which are the three great leading maxims of the world. In verse 35, our Lord adduces an argument or motive to overcome or remove the first impediment, arising from the inordinate love of life and its pleasures; in verse 36 to remove the second obstacle, arising from the love of riches; and in verse 38, to remove the third obstacle, arising from love of honours (see Matt. x. 32, 33).

38. "*Ashamed of Me and My words*" (see Matthew x. 32, 33). Ashamed publicly to confess our Lord's claims to our service, to the sacrifice of our very lives, if necessary, for His glory, to proclaim His Divinity and Humanity; and in order to avoid suffering or reproach, shall be ashamed of His teachings, as, unfortunately, many reputed Catholics are, when they are ashamed before heretics and infidels, to defend the doctrines of the Catholic Church. In, "*i.e.*," before, in presence of "*this adulterous and sinful generation*." "*Adulterous*," not showing the lineaments of their fathers. "*Sinful*," full of malice. How applicable are not these words to the hosts of infidels, now-a-days so numerous, who have abjured the faith of their fathers, and as well in private as in public, in the cottage and the palace, shake off the allegiance and filial obedience due to His anointed Vicar, the Sovereign Pontiff, the rock on which He built His Church.

39. "*Said to them*." This is the first verse of chapter ix. in the Greek copies. But the Vulgate arrangement, making it the last verse of this chapter (viii.), is preferable. For, in St. Matthew, where the same subject is treated of, it is the last verse of chapter xvi., in both the Greek and Latin copies (see Matt. xvi. 28).

"*The kingdom of God coming in power*," most likely, refers to the Transfiguration, the history of which is recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, immediately after the preceding declaration, as if to convey, that our Lord meant, by speaking of His glorious coming in the lifetime of some of those who heard Him, to refer to His Transfiguration, of which three of His Apostles were witnesses. (This is the opinion of St. Leo the Great, and others), and the mention of the precise number of days which intervened, would seem to be intended to convey this, as if to say, the promise was not left long unfulfilled. The Greek of St. Mark, here (*βασιλειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐλθουσαν*), would mean, till they saw the kingdom of God to have come, &c., and they saw it arrived in the glory of the Transfiguration. St. Matthew has, "*coming in His kingdom*" (xvi. 28), not, *into* His kingdom, as if there were reference to the glory of His final coming, but "*coming in*," *i.e.*, in the *glory of His kingdom*, which He is shortly

to display. Our Redeemer speaks of the near approach of this glorious manifestation, lest it might be imagined to be very distant, and to occur ages after they would have been all laid in their graves.

CHAPTER IX.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter St. Mark describes our Lord's Transfiguration (1-9). His solution of the doubts of His Apostles regarding the coming of Elias (10-12). The cure of a boy possessed by a deaf and dumb devil (13-26). The reason why the disciples were powerless to cast him out (27-28). His prediction regarding His approaching death (29-31). Instructions regarding humility (34-40). The grievousness of the sin of scandal—the obligation of avoiding it, be the sacrifice and privation caused thereby ever so great or so painful. The dreadful evils, the excruciating, never-ending tortures that await the unrepenting sinner in hell (41-49).

TEXT.

AND after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter and James and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves, and was transfigured before them.

2. *And his garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white.*

3. *And there appeared to them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.*

4. *And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

5. *For he knew not what he said; for they were struck with fear:*

6. *And there was a cloud overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud: saying: This is my most beloved son: hear ye him.*

7. *And immediately looking about, they saw no man any more but Jesus only with them.*

8. *And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them not to tell any man what things they had seen, till the Son of man shall be risen again from the dead.*

9. *And they kept the word to themselves; questioning together what that should mean, when he shall be risen from the dead.*

10. *And they asked him, saying: Why then do the Pharisees and Scribes say that Elias must come first?*

11. *Who answering said to them: Elias when he shall come first, shall restore all things, and as it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things and be despised.*

12. *But I say to you, that Elias also is come (and they have done to him whatsoever they would) as it is written of him.*

13. *And coming to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the Scribes disputing with them.*

14. *And presently all the people seeing Jesus, were astonished and struck with fear: and running to him, they saluted him.*

15. *And he asked them, What do you question about among you?*

16. *And one of the multitude answering, said: Master, I have brought my son to thee having a dumb spirit,*

17. *Who, wheresoever he taketh him, dasheth him, and he foameth, and gnasheth with the teeth, and pineth away: and I spoke to thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not.*

18. *Who answering them, said: O incredulous generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

19. *And they brought him. And when he had seen him, immediately the spirit troubled him; and being thrown down upon the ground, he rolled about foaming.*

20. *And he asked his father: How long time is it since this hath happened unto him? But he said: From his infancy:*

21. *And oftentimes hath he cast him into the fire and into waters, to destroy him. But if thou canst do anything, help us, having compassion on us.*

22. *And Jesus saith to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*

23. *And immediately the father of the boy crying out, with tears said: I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief.*

24. *And when Jesus saw the multitude running together, he threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him: Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee, go out of him: and enter not any more into him.*

25. *And crying out, and greatly tearing him, he went out of him, and he became as dead, so that many said: He is dead.*

26. *But Jesus taking him by the hand, lifted him up; and he arose.*

27. *And when he was come into the house, his disciples secretly asked him: Why could not we cast him out?*

28. *And he said to them: This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting.*

COMMENTARY.

1-8. (See Matt. xvii. 1-9).

9. "*They kept the word to themselves,*" i.e., they strictly observed the silence enjoined on them by our Lord, regarding His Transfiguration (v. 8). "*Word,*" means, by a Hebrew idiom, the fact of the Transfiguration. Hence, St. Luke, explaining St. Mark, says (ix. 36), "*And they held their peace, and told no one in those days any of these things which they had seen.*"

"*Questioning together,*" &c. They were inquiring of one another what was the meaning of the words, "*when He shall be risen from the dead.*" Not that the Apostles doubted concerning the resurrection of the body in general. The resurrection of the flesh was among the doctrines believed by the Jews, the Sadducees excepted (2 Mach. xii. 43; vii. 14; John xi. 24). They were ignorant of the circumstances of His resurrection, its time, His death, which should precede it, &c., or of its consequences in regard to themselves. They were filled with the idea of His establishing a glorious kingdom on earth, in which they would occupy the most honourable places, and fill the highest offices. Remembering, however, the rebuke administered to Peter, they durst not question Him on the subject.

10. *And they asked Him.*" "*And,*" connects this with the foregoing, as if He said, on their way down from the mountain (v. 8), and before they reached the other Apostles and the crowd (v. 13).

"*Why then do the Pharisees?*" &c. "*Then,*" or, *therefore*, is not found in most Greek copies; but, it is found in most Latin copies, in the Syriac interpretation, and St. Matthew (xviii. 10).

This question was probably suggested by the appearance of Elias at the Transfiguration, and his departure immediately after, coupled with the declaration made by our Lord (viii. 39), that some of them would see the kingdom of God to have come in power. Imagining this prediction or declaration to have been verified in His glorious appearance, which they were after witnessing, the Apostles raise a doubt as to what their teachers, the Scribes, had taught them regarding the coming

of Elias to precede Him. But remembering the rebuke administered to Peter (viii. 33), on the subject of our Lord's Passion, they dreaded to ask Him any questions directly regarding His resurrection, and its consequences, which caused them such perplexity, and very likely they expected to glean the desired information, or solution of their doubts from the reply to the question they propose, regarding the predicted coming of Elias. It is not unlikely, that the enemies of our Lord founded an argument against our Lord's Divinity and Messiaship, on the non-appearance of Elias. For, in the prophecy of Malachias (iv. 5), it was predicted, "*Behold I send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" Relying on this prophecy, the Jews confidently awaited the coming of Elias to prepare the way for their expected Messiah, before He entered on His glorious reign on earth. Such they hoped for, and still hope for, in accordance with their carnal notions. They confounded the twofold coming of the Messiah. The first coming was to be in mercy, in order to save the world. Elias was to precede this coming, not in his own person; but, in that of the Baptist, who was *Elias in spirit*, and was destined to prepare the way of the Lord, "*in the spirit and power of Elias*" (Luke i. 17). To this our Redeemer refers (v. 12). The second coming shall be in majesty to judge the world, and execute vengeance on the impious. Hence, called, "*the dreadful day of the Lord.*" Elias himself in person, as the Septuagint terms him, "*Elias the Thesbite,*" shall precede this coming. To this our Redeemer refers (v. 11).

11. In this verse, our Lord refers to the future coming of Elias before the end of the world. "*Shall restore all things,*" is commonly understood of His being instrumental in converting the remnant of the Jewish people, or, at least, in labouring hard and zealously to do so, although the success may not correspond with the effort made. "*He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children; and the heart of the children to their fathers*" (Mal. iv. 6), which, according to the Septuagint is, "*He shall restore the heart of the fathers to the children.*" By His preaching, He shall effect that many of the Jews who shall be then living, shall imitate and return to the faith of the ancient Patriarchs, and believe in their Messiah, long since come, in whom the Patriarchs believed, and whom with joy they beheld at a distant futurity. "*Abraham saw my day, and was glad*"—of the Baptist, it is said, "*He shall convert many of the children of Israel . . . turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children*" (Luke i. 16-17).

"*And as it is written of the Son of man.*" These words, according to some, may be an exclamation, conveying, how our Lord desired to suffer, and wished that this, as a subject of the greatest importance, should be brought under the notice of the Apostles. For, already had Moses and Elias spoken of it in their presence, "*dicebant excessum ejus quem completurus erat in Jerusalem*" (Luke ix. 31). Similar is the exclamation (Luke xii. 49), "*I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?*"

Others understand the words to convey, that as it was predicted of our Lord Himself, that He should suffer, the same treatment would be given to Elias in person, as had been already shown to *Elias in spirit*, viz., the Baptist. Our Redeemer would thus wish to fortify His Apostles against the scandal of His Passion, by showing, that sufferings, and even death, were at all times the portion and lot of the most eminent Saints. Hence, the words are thus filled up or completed: "*And as it is written of the Son of man,*" &c., so, the same shall happen to Elias (Ven. Bede). Others, connect the words thus: Elias "*shall restore all things,*" and shall explain to the Jews of his day, "*as it is written,*" &c., viz., the prophecies regarding the ignominious treatment,

death, and Passion of the Son of man, what had been at all times a source of scandal, a stumbling-block to the Jews.

12. This refers to *Elias in spirit*, or the Baptist. The disciples understood our Lord to refer to him (Matt. xvii. 13). ("*And they have done to him*," &c.; see Matt. xvii. 12.) "*As it is written of him*." As there is no prophecy regarding the sufferings of John the Baptist, commentators differ in their explanation of these words. Some connect, "*as it written of him*," immediately with the words, "*Elias also is come . . . as it written of him*," in the prophecies which have reference to John the Baptist (Mal. iii. 1); and these include in a parenthesis, the words ("*and they have done to him whatsoever they would*"). Others say, the words, "*of him*," refer to *Elias*, and then the passage would mean: They have done to John the Baptist, things similar to what the Scripture tells us was done to *Elias*. For, although *Elias* escaped death; still, he was subjected to the greatest persecution in the same cause for which John suffered, viz., in defending the laws of God, in the case of a furious woman. *Isaías* suffered from *Jezabel*; the Baptist, from *Herodias*.

13-28. (See Matt. xvii. 14-20.) This wretched boy was possessed by a dumb devil (v. 24). And, moreover, he was an epileptic (Matt. xvii. 14).

16. "*My son*." St. Luke says, "*his only son*" (ix. 38).

18. These words are addressed by our Lord to Jewish people, to whose want of faith He ascribes the unsuccessful efforts of the Apostles in regard to the expulsion of the demon. He speaks to His Apostles afterwards, in private (v. 27). Moreover, "*generation*," designates an entire people, rather than a handful of men such as the Apostles. He could hardly be said to be "*with*" the Apostles. They were rather *with Him*. Not so, however, as regards the Jewish people (Patrizzi).

19. "*And when he had seen him*." It is difficult to determine from the Greek, *καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτόν*, who is the subject, and who the predicate, here. The phrase would seem to be an instance of the *Anacoluthon* form (Beelen, *Grammatica Græcitatís*), and of a sort of Nominative absolute. Grammatically, "*him*," in the words, "*had seen him*," cannot refer to "*spirit*," which is the neuter gender (*πνεῦμα*), but logically, it should (Patrizzi, in *hunc locum*), as if the Evangelist said: When the wicked spirit saw our Lord, he convulsed the boy. It may also mean, when our Lord looked at the boy, the very look and presence of our Lord so affected the wicked spirit, that he at once agitated the frame of the wretched boy, of whom he had possession.

20. Our Lord asks the question, to give an idea of the great power exerted in the expulsion of this demon, and the difficulty of the cure arising from the inveteracy of the disorder.

21. This man's faith was different from that of the leper, who said, "*If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean*." But here says, "*If Thou canst do anything*," &c.

22. The father of the boy says to our Lord, "*If Thou canst*," &c., our Lord indirectly rebuking him for his want of faith, and implicitly attributing the failure of the Apostles to want of faith on the part of those who asked for the cure, says,

"*If thou canst believe.*" Not that our Lord conveys, that any man can have faith of himself, but, that if he have not faith, it is his own fault; it is because he places an obstacle to God's heavenly grace and inspirations.

"*All things are possible,*" &c. Faith on the part of him who prays, makes all things possible of attainment, from the infinite power of God; and hence, this man should not have doubtingly said, "*If Thou canst.*"

23. "*Help my unbelief,*" i.e., perfect my weak, infirm, imperfect faith. Supply what is wanting to it, increase it to such a degree, as to make me worthy to obtain the desired object of my petition, to which I fear the imperfection of my faith may be an obstacle. The unhappy man, although possessing faith, "*I believe,*" adds this out of an intense anxiety to receive that degree of faith, which would be necessary to obtain his earnest request.

24, 25. It is quite evident that this could not be true of a mere natural disease, as the Rationalists would have it. How command a disease to go out and not return? How could the disease cry out, while leaving the boy, he went out of him?

TEXT.

29. *And departing from thence they passed through Galilee, and he would not that any man should know it.*

30. *And he taught his disciples and said to them: The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed he shall rise again the third day.*

31. *But they understood not the word: and they were afraid to ask him.*

32. *And they came to Capharnaum. And when they were in the house, he asked them: What did you treat of in the way?*

33. *But they held their peace, for in the way they had disputed among themselves which of them should be the greatest.*

34. *And sitting down, he called the twelve, and saith to them: if any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all, and the minister of all.*

35. *And taking a child, he set him in the midst of them. Whom when he had embraced, he saith to them:*

36. *Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in my name, receiveth me. And whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*

37. *John answered him, saying: Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, who followeth not us, and we forbid him.*

38. *But Jesus said: Do not forbid him. For there is no man that doth a miracle in my name, and can soon speak ill of me.*

39. *For he that is not against you, is for you.*

40. *For whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in my name, because you belong to Christ: Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.*

COMMENTARY.

29. "*They passed.*" The Greek word, *παρεπορευοντο*, according to some, means, to pass by, or alongside the confines of "*Galilee.*" The Vatican MS. has *επορευοντο δια*, *passed through*, &c. Our Lord passed hurriedly and privately from the vicinity of Thabor or Cæsarea Philippi, where He performed the miracle just recorded, through the entire of Galilee, so as to reach Capharnaum unobserved.

Hence, He performed no miracles, nor did He preach on the way. Probably, among His reasons for privacy, was His desire to proceed to Jerusalem for the last time, in such a way, that nothing could interfere with the sacrifice He wished to offer there voluntarily for the redemption of the world, and that the people of Galilee would place no obstacle in His way, by attempting to detain Him among them for the purpose of profiting by His teaching and miraculous cures.

30. (See Matt. xvii. 21-22.)

31. They knew well He spoke of His death. For, St. Matthew informs us, "*they were troubled exceedingly.*" What they did not understand was, not the certain and future taking place of it; but, the *mode*, the mysterious economy, the consequences of the sad event, or how to reconcile it with the near approach of His glorious reign, which they were anxiously awaiting.

"*They were afraid to ask Him,*" mindful of the rebuke given to Peter (viii. 33).

32. While on their way, the thought which of them would be the greater, occupied them (Luke ix. 46); here (v. 33); and on their arrival at Capharnaum, those who demanded the tribute came and spoke to Peter on the subject (Matt. xxii. 23). Then our Lord questioned them about their thoughts and disputes on the way.

33. "*They held their peace,*" probably out of a feeling of shame, as the subject of their disputes argued a spirit of ambition (see Matt. xviii. 1, &c., where the apparent discrepancy between the narrative of the Evangelists on this matter is fully explained).

34. "*Sitting down,*" in the house, where, it would seem, not only the twelve, but others were assembled, as appears from His calling to Him and embracing a little child (v. 35), who was among them. He called the twelve apart, so that they heard what He wished to say.

"*If any man desire to be first,*" &c. This, according to some interpreters, conveys a rebuke, and denotes the punishment of ambition and pride; just like the words, "*whosoever exalts himself, shall be humbled;*" "*the first shall be last,*" &c. Others, more probably, understand it, in a sense more in accordance with our Redeemer's gentleness, to point out the line of conduct a disciple of Christ should follow, in order to become the first of all (see Matt. xviii. 3).

35. The lesson which our Redeemer meant to convey in embracing this little child and placing him in the midst of them, is clearly illustrative of the preceding sentence, and conveys, that humility and simple innocence of life are necessary dispositions for attaining a high place in God's kingdom. Our Lord Himself so explains it (Matt. xviii. 3, 4).

36. "*Receive,*" treat with honour and respect, and practically relieve and succour in his necessity. "*One such child,*" any of those who become, like this little child, humble, and last of all, for My sake (see Matt. xviii. 5).

37. "*John*"—the Apostle—"answered Him, saying." Answered, by Hebrew usage, often signifies, to *begin to speak*, and is frequently so employed in the Gospels, when no question preceded (Matt. xi. 25; xxi.). This interruption in the midst of

our Lord's discourse, had no connexion with the subject treated of; and hence, our Redeemer resumes the subject at verse 41. The incident is, however, recorded here by St. Mark, and by St. Luke (xi. 49). It may be, that the allusion made by our Lord to His "*name*," reminded John of what he now mentions regarding the man whom he saw casting out devils in our Lord's name. The man in question may have invoked our Lord's power and authority—"in Thy name"—and John may have doubted the propriety of prohibiting him from doing so, and hence, he consults our Lord. Although, to the Apostles only was the power of casting out devils publicly and solemnly given, still, it was not confined to them exclusively; others, besides, had the power, and successfully exercised it in the early ages (xvi. 17). The followers of our Lord, who joined the body of His disciples, ought, one would think, be invested with the powers bestowed on Judas Iscariot, the traitor, who exercised the power of casting out demons.

"Who followeth not us," did not belong to our body, or was not associated with us. It is likely, this man had faith in our Lord, without strength or courage enough to embrace the austerities of the Apostolic life. St. John does not say, who followeth not *Thee*, who believeth not in *Thee*. In forbidding the man to work miracles, the Apostles acted from a zeal for the honour of their Master, dreading lest the common use of His name might be derogatory to His dignity. Similar is the feeling expressed by Josue, in regard to Moses (Num. xi. 28). They supposed that this man was not duly authorized or commanded by our Lord; and hence, as His authorized legates, they interpose to guard the dignity of their Master.

"And we forbade him," to which is added in the Greek, "*because he followeth not us*." The Vatican MS. has the words here only, but not before the words, "*we forbade him*," as is found in the Vulgate.

38. Our Lord, while mildly abstaining from censuring the act of His Apostles, tells them not to repeat the prohibition; and conveying more than He expresses; He gives as reason, that no man works a miracle in His name, who must not praise and admire the power of Him, in whose name of power he performs such wonders. This our Lord expresses, by merely saying, that such a man could not possibly blaspheme or speak ill of Him (1 Cor. xii. 3). For if so, his own mode of acting would commit him; and men would say, if you thus speak ill of Him, why use His name and power. In the words of our Lord, "*speak ill of Me*," it is implied, that such a man should speak well of Him, and help to propagate His Gospel. Hence, without approving of the motives by which the man was actuated, our Lord does not wish that the Apostles would prevent an act in itself, good and tending to God's glory, be the motive of it what it may (Philip. i. 18).

"*Soon*," i.e., readily. In some few instances, men may work miracles in the name of our Lord, and speak ill of Him, as in case of Judas Iscariot. But such instances are very rare and exceptional.

39. He assigns another reason for not prohibiting him, viz., that this man—although not associated with them—by not being *against* them, was *for* them. He does their work; and like them, commends the name and power of Christ to men. In the preceding verse (37), He shows, that this man cannot be *against* them; in this, He shows, that the man in question is *for* them, as their assistant and co-operator. This is reconciled with what is said (Matt. xii. 30), "*He that is not with Me is against Me*," in this way: In this latter text is meant generally, not the man who does not follow Christ personally, like the Apostles but, the man who neither is favourable

to Christ, nor does the things that are Christ's, whose case is altogether different from that contemplated here. Moreover, in St. Matthew, there is question of a man who is not with *our Lord*, "*with Me*;" here, of man who is not with the Apostles, "*. . . against you . . . for you*." Others say that our Lord here, lays down a rule for guidance in judging others, that as long as a man's acts do not prove him to be bad, he is presumed to be good. And hence, whatever this man's intentions were, his acts being good, he was to be judged as such, and not prevented from pursuing the same course.

40. This is generally assigned as a third reason, to prove, they should not prohibit Him to expel demons. For, if the man who gives a cup of cold water in the name of Christ, who gives it to his followers, because "*they belong to Christ*," out of the love for Christ, shall not lose his reward, be it temporal or eternal, according as he may be capable of meriting it, how much more shall this man be entitled to a reward, who does what is still more charitable, in curing the afflicted, and does so in the name of Christ, thus advancing His glory? The reward, in case the man who does the good work have not faith, could not be eternal. It may, however, help to his receiving the gift of faith, and for disposing him to receive it. If there be question of our having the faith, then, the work, if done from a good motive, shall be entitled to a supernatural and eternal reward. Commentators assign this third reason as an *argumentum a minori ad majus*.

TEXT.

41. *And whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.*

42. *And if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire:*

43. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.*

44. *And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet, to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire:*

45. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.*

46. *And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire:*

47. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.*

48. *For every one shall be salted with fire: and every victim shall be salted with salt.*

49. *Salt is good. But if the salt become unsavoury; wherewith will you season it? Have salt in you, and have peace among you.*

COMMENTARY.

41. As our Lord was interrupted in His discourse (v. 37), He resumes it here again, so that this verse (41) is to be connected immediately with verse 36. "*Whosoever shall scandalize*," &c. (See Matt. xviii. 6-9.)

43-45-47. The repetition of the words of these verses, points out the dreadful severity of the pains of hell. Hence, St. Augustine exclaims, "*quem non terreat ista repetitio et illius pænæ comminatio tam vehemens ore Divino*" (De Civ. Dei, Lib. xxi. c. 8). The undying worm and unextinguishable fire, referred to in the last chapter of Isaias, where he treats of the felicity of the just, and the punishment of the impious, denotes the twofold punishment of the reprobate in hell, as is elsewhere

written, "*duplici contritione* (of soul and body) *contere eos.*" By "*worm*," is meant the undying remorse of conscience, the continuous recollection of evil done. There are, however, many commentators who understand the word literally, of worms, which will gnaw their flesh, in the fire of hell. These worms are preserved there, for the punishment of real fire, which, by the power of God; and, as there is no doubt but there is question of real fire, which, by the power of God, acts on spirits, why not also say the same of the worms? This is held by St. Augustine (Lib. xxi. c. 9, de Civit. Dei); Basil, in Psal. xxxiii.; Cyril Oratio de exitu animæ; Innocent III., de Contemplat. Mundi, c. 21; Gregory the Great; Chrysostom, &c. *Fire*, the most active of all agencies, is employed to torture their bodies.

48. In this verse is assigned a reason why "*their fire is not extinguished*," and the damned are not utterly consumed by the fire of hell. As regards "*every one*"—of the reprobate—the fire in which he shall be immersed shall act on him as salt, the properties of which are to burn and preserve. So, also, the power of God shall impart an undying efficacy to the fire of hell, to torture its victims, and preserve them unconsumed for ever.

"*And every victim*," &c. This is allusive to the law, requiring that every victim offered to God in the Old Law (Lev. ii. 13), should be first seasoned with salt; so, the damned, being victims of God's eternal justice, which they can never satisfy, must, while thus offered, that is to say, for ever, be seasoned with the salt of hell's fire. "*And*," is generally interpreted "*as*," "*every one shall*," &c., "*as every victim*," &c., or, it may be, a quotation from Leviticus.

Others understand the words of this verse to have reference to the good, who would be stimulated to the exceedingly torturing process of plucking out the eye, and tearing off the hand, when necessary for salvation. For, as the victims of old should be seasoned with salt, so also those who offer themselves as victims to God, and desire to please Him, must be seasoned with the salt of tribulation, which fire often signifies.

49. "*Salt is good*," for seasoning and preserving human food. "*But if the salt*," &c. There is no means for restoring to salt its savour once lost. The mention of "*salt*," in the preceding, furnishes our Lord with an occasion of exhorting His Apostles to give up the contentions about superiority, which gave rise to His present discourse (v. 36). "*Salt*" preserves from corruption; it is an emblem of wisdom. Hence, He exhorts the Apostles to preserve this quality of prudence, wisdom, and discretion, of which salt is the emblem, and thus, by giving up their contentions, to preserve peace among themselves. This they will the more easily accomplish, if, under the guidance of heavenly wisdom, giving up all ideas of human ambition, they cease to dispute about priority or pre-eminence of any kind. For, nothing is so calculated to estrange men from the doctrine of their preachers, as to see them disputing among one another, seeking pre-eminence above one another, seeking themselves, and not the interests of Jesus Christ.

Patrizzi (*in hunc locum*) interprets the words of this verse to mean, that "*salt*," wherewith the damned are salted, is good to be meditated upon, and always kept in mind, to preserve us from sin, "*memorare novissima tua et in æternum non peccabis.*" "*But, if the salt become unsavoury*," that is, if you lose all recollection of these torments of fire, its power and efficacy, whereby it should have preserved you from sin, you shall utterly fail, and you have no means of supplying the defect. "*Have salt in you*," i.e. always remember the thought of hell fire, "*and have peace*," &c. This has reference

to the contention among the Apostles. This is, however, rather a *moral* than a *literal* interpretation of the passage.

CHAPTER X.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, St. Mark records our Lord's reply to the captious questions of the Pharisees, on the subject of divorce, and His doctrine establishing the indissolubility of marriage (1-12). Our Lord blesses little children (13-16). He proposes to a young man, who consulted Him as to the securest means of obtaining life eternal, the observance of the counsels of Evangelical perfection (17-22). He took occasion, from the sadness which our Lord's counsel caused this young man, to point out the difficulty for the rich to reach heaven (23-27). In answer to Peter, He points out the abundant reward in store for those who have left all for His sake (28-31). He predicts His bitter Passion and death (32-34). He refuses the petition for pre-eminence, preferred by the sons of Zebedee, and takes occasion to inculcate humility (35-45). He restores his sight to a blind man at Jericho (46-52).

TEXT.

AND rising up from thence, he cometh into the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan : and the multitudes flock to him again. And as he was accustomed, he taught them again.

2. And the Pharisees coming to him asked him : Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife ? tempting him.

3. But he answering, saith to them : What did Moses command you ?

4. Who said : Moses permitted to write a bill of divorce, and to put her away.

5. To whom Jesus answering said : Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you that precept.

6. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female.

7. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother ; and shall cleave to his wife.

8. And they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh.

9. What therefore God had joined together, let not man put asunder.

10. And in the house again his disciples asked him concerning the same thing.

11. And he saith to them : Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

13. And they brought to him young children, that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14. Whom when Jesus saw, he was much displeased, and saith to them : Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of God.

15. Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it.

16. And embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them.

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, a certain man running up and kneeling before him, asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting ?

18. And Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good ? None is good but one, that is God.

19. Thou knowest the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, bear not false witness, do no fraud, honour thy father and mother."

20. But he answering, said to him, Master, all these things I have observed from my youth.

21. And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him : One thing is wanting unto thee : go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow me.

22. *Who being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

23. *And Jesus looking round about, saith to his disciples: How hardly shall they, that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God!*

24. *And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus again answering, saith to them: Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!*

25. *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

26. *Who wondered the more, saying among themselves: Who then can be saved?*

27. *And Jesus looking on them, saith: With men it is impossible; but not with God. For all things are possible with God.*

28. *And Peter began to say unto him: Behold, we have left all things, and have followed thee.*

29. *Jesus answering, said: Amen I say to you, there is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for my sake and for the gospel,*

30. *Who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions: and in the world to come life everlasting.*

31. *But many that are first, shall be last; and the last, first.*

32. *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem: and Jesus went before them, and they were astonished; and following were afraid. And taking again the twelve, he began to tell them the things that should befall him.*

33. *Saying: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests, and to the scribes and ancients, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles.*

34. *And they shall mock him, and spit on him, and scourge him, and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

COMMENTARY.

1. "From thence," His house in Capharnaum.

1-15. (See Matt. xix. 1-15.)

7, 8. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother; and shall cleave to his wife. And they two shall be in one flesh." These are the words of Adam, spoken under the influence of inspiration; and hence, may be regarded as the words of God Himself, as is clear from the words of verse 9.

"Two," is not found in the present Hebrew copies of Genesis (ii. 24), from which these words are taken. Hence, some account for its insertion here, by saying, in the words of St. Jerome, that, in their quotations from the old Scriptures, the writers of the New Testament *did not consider the words, but the meaning*, and that the same holds true, when they quote the words of our Lord Himself, or purport relating them. But others, Patrizzi (*in hunc locum*), reply, that, οἱ δύο, or, *those who were two*, are found in the Greek, Syriac, Vulgate, and Chaldaic versions of Genesis, which fully bear out the reading of Matthew and Mark. So does the Samaritan version also quote the word, "two," among those uttered by Adam. Hence, we are to conclude that the reading of this word is genuine, and that the readings of Genesis, in which it was omitted, are imperfect; and the whole force of our Redeemer's argument is founded on the words, "*one flesh*." Hence, He concludes, "*they are one flesh*," which he confirms by the denial of the contrary. "*Now they are not two.*"

17-22. (See Matt. xix. 16-22.)

23-27. (See Matt. xix. 23-26.)

28-31. (See Matt. xix. 27-30.)

32. (See Matt. xx. 17, 18, 19). This occurred about the last month of our Redeemer's mortal life. "*Going up to Jerusalem.*" They had not yet reached Jerusalem, nor even Jericho, which is eighteen miles distant from it. The Jews, when speaking of going to Jerusalem, used the word *ascending*, or *going up*, and, when leaving it, *descending*, as Jerusalem was situated on hilly ground.

"*And Jesus went before them.*" He usually, on His journeys, despatched some of His disciples before Him; but, on this occasion, to show the alacrity with which He voluntarily went to meet death, which was now impending, He went *before*. "*And they were astonished,*" at His fortitude. "*And following, they were afraid,*" for His personal safety. Possibly, from human infirmity, they may have feared for themselves also. As yet, the spirit of strength and fortitude had not descended on them. The words may mean, "*they timidly followed.*"

"*And taking the twelve apart,*" from the others who accompanied Him on this, His final journey, "*He began to tell them the things that should befall Him,*" in order to dispel their fears, by knowing that He submitted to all this voluntarily; and that ignominy and death would be followed by glory and immortal life.

33, 34. For the third time, our Lord forewarns His Apostles of His coming Passion—1. Mark viii. 31; 2. Mark ix. 30; and now He does so, more fully and explicitly, to guard against the scandal of His Passion. But, on all occasions, in order to confirm their faith, He speaks of His glorious Resurrection and its circumstances, as there can be no clearer proof of His Divinity.

TEXT.

35. *And James and John the sons of Zebedee, come to him, saying: Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, thou wouldst do it for us:*

36. *But he said to them: What would you that I should do for you?*

37. *And they said: Grant to us, that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.*

38. *And Jesus said to them: You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of: or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?*

39. *But they said to him: We can. And Jesus saith to them: You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of: and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized, you shall be baptized.*

40. *But to sit on my right hand, or on my left, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared.*

41. *And the ten hearing it, began to be much displeased at James and John.*

42. *But Jesus calling them, saith to them: You know that they who seem to rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them: and their princes have power over them.*

43. *But it is not so among you: but whosoever will be greater, shall be your minister.*

44. *And whosoever will be first among you, shall be the servant of all.*

45. *For the Son of man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many.*

46. *And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho, with his disciples, and a very great multitude, Bartimeus, the blind man, the son of Timeus, sat by the way side begging.*

47. *Who when he had heard, that it was Jesus of Nazareth, began to cry out, and to say : Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me*

48. *And many rebuked him, that he might hold his peace : but he cried a great deal the more : Son of David, have mercy on me.*

49. *And Jesus standing still commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying to him : Be of better comfort : arise, he calleth thee.*

50. *Who casting off his garment leaped up, and came to him.*

51. *And Jesus answering, said to him : What wilt thou that I should do to thee ? And the blind man said to him : Rabboni, that I may see.*

52. *And Jesus saith to him : Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him in the way.*

COMMENTARY.

35-45. (See Matt. xx. 20-28.)

38. It was usual with our Lord to designate by the words, "*chalice*" and "*baptism*," the sufferings and tortures which He was to undergo (Matt. xxvi. 39-42 ; Mark xiv. 36 ; Luke xii. 50 ; John xviii. 11).

46-52. (See Matt. xx. 29-34.)

CHAPTER XL

TEXT.

AND *when they were drawing near to Jerusalem and to Bethania at the mount of olives, he sendeth two of his disciples,*

2. *And saith to them : Go into the village that is over against you, and immediately at your coming in thither, you shall find a colt tied, upon which no man yet hath sat : loose him, and bring him.*

3. *And if any man shall say to you, What are you doing ? say ye that the Lord hath need of him : and immediately he will let him come hither.*

4. *And going their way, they found the colt tied before the gate without in the meeting of two ways : and they loose him.*

5. *And some of them that stood there, said to them : What do you loosing the colt ?*

6. *Who said to them as Jesus had commanded them ; and they let him go with them.*

7. *And they brought the colt to Jesus ; and they lay their garments on him, and he sat upon him.*

8. *And many spread their garments in the way : and others cut down boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way.*

9. *And they that went before and they that followed, cried, saying : "Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

10. *Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh, Hosannah in the highest."*

11. *And he entered into Jerusalem, into the temple : and having viewed all things round about, when now the even tide was come, he went out to Bethania with the twelve.*

12. *And the next day when they came out from Bethania, he was hungry.*

13. *And when he had seen afar off a fig-tree having leaves, he came if perhaps he might find anything on it. And when he was come to it, he found nothing but leaves. For it was not the time for figs.*

14. *And answering, he said to it: May no man hereafter eat fruit of thee any more for ever. And his disciples heard it.*

15. *And they come to Jerusalem. And when he was entered into the temple, he began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves.*

16. *And he suffered not that any man should carry a vessel through the temple;*

17. *And he taught, saying to them: Is it not written, "My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves."*

18. *Which when the chief priests and the scribes had heard, they sought how they might destroy him. For they feared him, because the whole multitude was in admiration at his doctrine.*

19. *And when evening was come, he went forth out of the city.*

20. *And when they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.*

21. *And Peter remembering, said to him: Rabbi, behold the fig-tree, which thou didst curse, is withered away.*

22. *And Jesus answering, saith to them: Have the faith of God.*

23. *Amen I say to you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be cast into the sea, and shall not stagger in his heart, but believe that whatsoever he saith shall be done: it shall be done unto him.*

24. *Therefore I say unto you, all things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you.*

25. *And when you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have ought against any man; that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your sins.*

26. *But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven, forgive you your sins.*

27. *And they come again to Jerusalem. And when he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests and the scribes and the ancients.*

28. *And they say to him: By what authority dost thou these things? and who hath given thee this authority that thou shouldst do these things?*

29. *And Jesus answering, said to them: I will also ask you one word, and answer you me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.*

30. *The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me.*

31. *But they thought with themselves saying; if we say from heaven; he will say, Why then did you not believe him?*

32. *If we say from men, we fear the people. For all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed.*

33. *And they answering say to Jesus: we know not. And Jesus answering, saith to them: Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.*

COMMENTARY.

1-33 (See Matt. xxi. 1-27.)

CHAPTER XII.

TEXT.

AND he began to speak to them in parables: A certain man planted a vineyard and made a hedge about it, and dug a place for the wine fat, and built a tower, and let it to husbandmen: and went into a far country.

2. *And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant to receive of the husbandmen, of the fruit of the vineyard.*

3. *Who having laid hands on him, beat him, and sent him away empty.*

4. *And again he sent to them another servant ; and him they wounded in the head, and used him reproachfully.*

5. *And again he sent another; and him they killed : and many others, of whom some they beat, and others they killed.*

6. *Therefore having yet one son most dear to him ; he also sent him unto them the last of all, saying : They will reverence my son.*

7. *But the husbandmen said one to another : This is the heir ; come let us kill him ; and the inheritance shall be ours.*

8. *And laying hold on him they killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.*

9. *What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do ? He will come and destroy those husbandmen ; and will give the vineyard to others.*

10. *And have you not read this scripture, " The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner :*

11. *By the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes ? "*

12. *And they sought to lay hands on him, but they feared the people. For they knew that he spoke this parable to them. And leaving him they went their way.*

13. *And they send to him some of the Pharisees and of the Herodians ; that they should catch him in his words.*

14. *Who coming, say to him : Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and carest not for any man ; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar ; or shall we not give it ?*

15. *Who knowing their wiliness, saith to them : Why tempt you me ? bring me a penny that I may see it.*

16. *And they brought it him. And he saith to them : Whose is this image, and inscription ? They say to him, Cæsar's.*

17. *And Jesus answering, said to them : Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.*

18. *And there came to him the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection ; and they asked him, saying :*

19. *Master, Moses wrote unto us, that if any man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up seed to his brother.*

20. *Now there were seven brethren ; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no issue.*

21. *And the second took her and died : and neither did he leave any issue. And the third in like manner.*

22. *And the seven all took her in like manner ; and did not leave issue. Last of all the woman also died.*

23. *In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise again, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife.*

24. *And Jesus answering saith to them : Do ye not therefore err, because you know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God ?*

25. *For when they shall rise again from the dead, they shall neither marry, nor be married, but are as the angels in heaven.*

26. *And as concerning the dead that they rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spoke to him, saying : " I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? "*

27. *He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You therefore do greatly err.*

28. *And there came one of the scribes that had heard them reasoning together, and seeing that he had answered them well, asked him which was the first commandment of all.*

29. *And Jesus answered him: The first commandment of all is, "Hear, O Israel: ~~the~~ Lord thy God is one God.*

30. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength." This is the first commandment.*

31. *And the second is like to it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is no other commandment greater than these.*

32. *And the scribe said to him: Well, master, thou hast said in truth, that there is one God, and there is no other besides him.*

33. *And that he should be loved with the whole heart, and with the whole understanding, and with the whole soul, and with the whole strength: and to love one's neighbour as oneself is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices.*

34. *And Jesus seeing that he had answered wisely, said to him: Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.*

35. *And Jesus answering, said, teaching in the temple: How do the scribes say, that Christ is the son of David?*

36. *For David himself saith by the Holy Ghost: "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool."*

37. *David therefore himself calleth him Lord, and whence is he then his son? And a great multitude heard him gladly.*

38. *And he said to them in his doctrine: Beware of the scribes, who love to walk in long robes, and to be saluted in the market-place,*

39. *And to sit in the first chairs in the synagogues, and to have the highest places at suppers:*

40. *Who devour the houses of widows under the pretence of long prayer: these shall receive greater judgment.*

41. *And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much.*

42. *And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing.*

43. *And calling his disciples together, he saith to them: Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury.*

44. *For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living.*

COMMENTARY.

1-12. (See Matt. xxi. 33-46.)

13-17. (See Matt. xxii. 16-22.)

18-27. (See Matt. xxii. 23-33.)

28-34. (See Matt. xxii. 34-39.)

33. "*And to love one's neighbour as himself, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices.*" These words were not explicitly uttered by our Redeemer, although implied in the words (v. 31) "*There is no other commandment greater than these.*" They are the words of the Scribe, who, although he may in the commencement have approached in a captious spirit (St. Matthew, xxii., says, "*tempting Him,*" which however, does not always necessarily imply a captious motive), now taken with our Redeemer's doctrine and manner, thoroughly approves of it; and in his words it is conveyed, that the Jewish Priests, perhaps from motives of avarice, proclaimed that

"holocausts and sacrifices," of every kind, were the most acceptable homage paid to God, obedience and the interior virtues not excepted, notwithstanding the express teaching of Holy Scriptures to the contrary (Psa. lix. 14, &c. ; l. 18-21).

34. "*Not far from the kingdom of God.*" His remarks on our Lord's doctrine showed, he respected our Lord ; and, although not yet a follower or Christian—"not far"—still, he seemed disposed to co-operate with the grace of God, in embracing the faith.

35-37. (See Matt. xxii. 41-46.)

38. "*And He said to them in His doctrine,*" i.e., while teaching and instructing them, "*Beware,*" &c.

38, 39. (See Matt. xxiii. 5, 6, 7.)

40. (See Matt. xxiii. 14.)

41. "*Sitting over against the treasury.*" Our Lord reposed a little after disputing with the Pharisees. "*Over against,*" i.e., opposite. *Treasury*, in the Vulgate, *Gazophylacium*, a word of mixed Persian and Greek origin. *Gaza*, meant treasures among the Persians ; *Phylacium*, a Greek word, means a repository, or *place for guarding a thing* (Bede). The word, "*treasury,*" though in its general acceptation denoting a place for preserving treasures of gold or silver, is frequently employed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, to denote a place for keeping the treasures destined for the use of the temple. Sometimes, it signifies a large, capacious place, a chamber adjoining the porticoes of the temple, destined for holding the wealth of every kind belonging to the temple (1 Paralip. xxviii. 12 ; Jer. xxxv. 4 ; 2 Esdras x. 37). Sometimes, it is used to denote chests or pillars destined for receiving the oblations of the people presented for the use of the temple and like sacred purposes.

Such a chest was first ordered by Joas (4 Kings xii. 9 ; 2 Paralip. xxiv. 8). It is to such, reference is made here. In the time of our Lord, the most celebrated repository was that placed at the Eastern gate, at the extremity of the halls of Israel and of the women, where the concourse of people entering and leaving was greatest. It is probable, a chest or pillar of this kind was placed at each gate of the temple, to afford all an opportunity of contributing. It was opposite the Eastern gate, our Lord sat. He thus had an opportunity of seeing the people deposit their contributions in this chest destined for receiving them.

42. "*Which make a farthing,*" may mean, that each of the *mites* made a farthing, which is more probable ; because, according to Plutarch, in his life of Cicero, "*quadrans minimum est in nummorum genere,*" or, the "*two mites*" together may have made only one farthing of Roman money. This small sum, which she may have gained by begging or hard labour, she gave, lest she might appear before God empty-handed.

43. Our Lord never omits an opportunity of imparting instruction. What He says here manifestly refers to the sum given, not absolutely, but relatively, as is clear from the following verse.

44. Others cast in out of their superfluities, whereas she cast in all she possessed

including what was absolutely necessary for the very sustenance of life. His words may also mean—and were intended to mean—that she reaped more merit before God, than any of the rest, whether the gift itself, and its circumstances, or the dispositions of the giver be considered. This is very consoling to the poor, when, out of their poverty, they give alms for God's sake.

CHAPTER XIII.

TEXT.

AND as he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples saith to him: Master, behold what manner of stones, and what buildings are here.

2. And Jesus answering, said to him: Seest thou all these great buildings? There shall not be left a stone upon a stone, that shall not be thrown down.

3. And as he sat on the mount of Olivet over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him apart:

4. Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall begin to be fulfilled?

5. And Jesus answering, began to say to them, Take heed lest any man deceive you.

6. For many shall come in my name saying, I am he; and they shall deceive many.

7. And when you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, fear ye not. For such things must needs be, but the end is not yet.

8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be earthquakes, in divers places, and famins. These things are the beginning of sorrows.

9. But look to yourselves. For they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you shall stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them.

10. And unto all nations the gospel must first be preached.

11. And when they shall lead you and deliver you up, be not thoughtful beforehand what you shall speak; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12. And the brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son; and children shall rise up against the parents, and shall work their death.

13. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved.

14. And when you shall see the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not: he that readeth let him understand: then let them that are in Judea, flee unto the mountains:

15. And let him that is on the housetop, not go down into the house nor enter therein to take anything out of the house:

16. And let him that shall be in the field, not turn back to take up his garment.

17. And woe to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days.

18. But pray ye, that these things happen not in winter.

19. For in those days shall be such tribulations as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, neither shall be.

20. And unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect which he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; lo, he is here: do not believe.

22. *For there will rise up false Christs and false prophets, and they shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect.*

23. *Take ye heed therefore; behold I have foretold you all things.*

24. *But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.*

25. *And the stars of heaven shall be falling down, and the powers, that are in heaven, shall be moved.*

26. *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory.*

27. *And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.*

28. *Now of the fig-tree learn ye a parable. When the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves are come forth, you know that summer is very near.*

29. *So you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know ye that it is very nigh, even at the doors.*

30. *Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass, until all these things be done.*

31. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.*

32. *But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father.*

33. *Take ye heed, watch and pray. For ye know not when the time is.*

34. *Even as a man who going into a far country, left his house; and gave authority to his servants over every work, and commanded the porter to watch.*

35. *Watch ye therefore (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh: at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning).*

36. *Lest coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping.*

37. *And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.*

COMMENTARY.

1-14. (See Matt. xxiv. 1-14; also Matt. x. 17-22.)

14-24. (See Matt. xxiv. 15-29.)

24-32. (See Matt. xxiv. 29-36.)

33. (See Matt. xxiv. 42.)

"*Watch and pray.*" Our Redeemer stimulates us to constant vigilance. As, however, all our vigilance would be of no avail without the aid of Divine grace, hence, He prescribes "*prayer*," the condition which God ordinarily requires for bestowing His grace on us. "*Ask, and you shall receive.*" Hence, if we *ask not*, we will not receive. Our Lord assigns the reason why we should always watch and pray; because, "*we know not when the time is.*"

34. "*Even as a man who going into a far country, left his house;*" that is to say, the same thing shall happen in reference to My coming, or, the kingdom of heaven, that occurs in the case of a man, "*who, going into a far country,*" assigns to his servants these different posts, their several ministrations and duties in the house, but above all, gives instructions "*to the porter to watch.*" The example applies very clearly to our Lord, who, ascending into heaven, gave the charge of "His house" the Church of the living God, to her chief governors, and gave the porter who holds the keys, His own visible Vicar, special charge over the concerns of all. This applies in a subordinate degree, to all the rulers of the Church, and also is meant to admonish every member of His Church to discharge faithfully, with an eye to future judgment,

which may arrive when they are least prepared for it, the different duties marked out for them in the several spheres and positions in the Church.

35. "*Watch ye therefore,*" &c. "*The Lord of the house,*" is our Redeemer Himself. The different periods or stages of night denotes the different stages of life. "*The morning*" of life, boyhood; "*cock-crow,*" in youth; "*midnight,*" manhood; "*even,*" old age. And our Lord represents the different periods of life, under the image or symbol of night and darkness, in comparison with the shining and never-fading day of eternity.

36. They should be always ready, "*lest coming on a sudden,*" unexpectedly, He may find them unprepared to give a satisfactory account of their employments at judgment. Possibly, they might be surprised in sin, and while indulging in the wicked passions, and in the prohibited works of darkness.

37. What He said is not merely intended for those He was then addressing. It concerns "*all,*" every generation of men till the end of the world. The first coming of our Lord to judgment virtually takes place at the death of each one. As each one is then found, and then judged, will he be judged at the last day, and his doom inevitably sealed for all eternity (St. Augustine, Ep. 80 ad Hesychium).

CHAPTER XIV.

TEXT.

NOW the feast of the pasch, and of the azymes was after two days: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might by some wile lay hold on him, and kill him.

2. *But they said: Not on the festival day, lest there should be a tumult among the people.*

3. *And when he was in Bethania in the house of Simon the leper, and was at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of precious spikenard: and breaking the alabaster box she poured it out upon his head.*

4. *Now there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said: Why was this waste of the ointment made?*

5. *For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her.*

6. *But Jesus said: Let her alone, why do you molest her? She hath wrought a good work upon me.*

7. *For the poor you have always with you; and whensoever you will, you may do them good; but me you have not always.*

8. *What she had, she hath done; she is come beforehand to anoint my body for the burial.*

9. *Amen I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told for a memorial of her.*

10. *And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests, to betray him to them.*

11. *Who hearing it were glad; and they promised him they would give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.*

12. *Now on the first day of the unleavened bread when they sacrificed the pasch, the disciples say to him: Whither wilt thou that we go, and prepare for thee to eat the pasch?*

13. *And he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith to them : Go ye into the city ; and there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water, follow him ;*

14. *And whithersoever he shall go in, say to the master of the house, The master saith, Where is my refectory, where I may eat the pasch with my disciples ?*

15. *And he will show you a large dining-room furnished, and there prepare ye for us.*

16. *And his disciples went their way, and came into the city ; and they found as he had told them, and they prepared the pasch.*

17. *And when evening was come, he cometh with the twelve.*

18. *And when they were at table and eating, Jesus saith : Amen I say to you, one of you that eateth with me shall betray me.*

19. *But they began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one by one : Is it I ?*

20. *Who saith to them : One of the twelve, who dippeth with me his hand in the dish.*

21. *And the Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him : but wo to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born.*

22. *And whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread : and blessing broke, and gave to them, and said : Take ye, this is my body.*

23. *And having taken the chalice, giving thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.*

24. *And he said to them : This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many.*

25. *Amen I say to you, that I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new in the kingdom of God.*

26. *And when they had said a hymn, they went forth to the mount of olives.*

27. *And Jesus saith to them : You will all be scandalized in my regard this night ; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be dispersed."*

28. *But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*

29. *But Peter saith to him : Although all shall be scandalized in thee, yet not I.*

30. *And Jesus saith to him : Amen I say to thee, to-day even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

31. *But he spoke the more vehemently : Although I should die together with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner also said they all.*

32. *And they come to a farm called Gethsemani. And he saith to his disciples : Sit you here, while I pray.*

33. *And he taketh Peter and James and John with him ; and he began to fear and to be heavy.*

34. *And he saith to them : My soul is sorrowful even unto death ; stay you here, and watch.*

35. *And when he was gone forward a little, he fell flat on the ground ; and he prayed that if it might be, the hour might pass from him :*

36. *And he saith : Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee, remove this chalice from me, but not what I will, but what thou wilt.*

37. *And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping. And he saith to Peter : Simon, sleepest thou ? couldst thou not watch one hour ?*

38. *Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

39. *And going away again, he prayed, saying the same words.*

40. *And when he returned he found them again asleep (for their eyes were heavy) and they knew not what to answer him.*

41. *And he cometh the third time, and saith to them : Sleep ye now, and take your rest.*

It is enough : the hour is come ; behold the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42. *Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray me, is at hand.*

43. *And while he was yet speaking, cometh Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the ancients.*

44. *And he that betrayed him had given them a sign, saying : Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, lay hold on him, and lead him away carefully.*

45. *And when he was come, immediately going up to him, he saith : Hail, Rabbi : and he kissed him.*

46. *But they laid hands on him, and held him.*

47. *And one of them that stood by drawing a sword, struck a servant of the chief priest, and cut off his ear.*

48. *And Jesus answering, said to them : Are you come out as to a robber with swords and staves to apprehend me ?*

49. *I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not lay hands on me. But, that the scriptures may be fulfilled.*

50. *Then his disciples leaving him, all fled away.*

51. *And a certain young man followed him having a linen cloth cast about his naked body ; and they laid hold on him.*

52. *But he, casting off the linen cloth, fled from them naked.*

53. *And they brought Jesus to the high-priest ; and all the priests and the scribes and the ancients assembled together.*

54. *And Peter followed him afar off even into the court of the high-priest ; and he sat with the servants at the fire, and warmed himself.*

55. *And the chief priests and all the council sought for evidence against Jesus, that they might put him to death, and found none.*

56. *For many bore false witness against him, and their evidences were not agreeing.*

57. *And some rising up, bore false witness against him, saying :*

58. *We heard him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another, not made with hands.*

59. *And their witness did not agree.*

60. *And the high-priest rising up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying : Answerest thou nothing to the things that are laid to thy charge by these men ?*

61. *But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high-priest asked him, and said to him : Art thou the Christ the Son of the blessed God ?*

62. *And Jesus said to him : I am. And you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*

63. *Then the high-priest rending his garments, saith : What need we any further witnesses ?*

64. *You have heard the blasphemy. What think you ? Who all condemned him to be guilty of death.*

65. *And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him : Prophecy : and the servants struck him with the palms of their hands.*

66. *Now when Peter was in the court below, there cometh one of the maid-servants of the high-priest.*

67. *And when she had seen Peter warming himself, looking on him she saith : Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.*

68. *But he denied, saying ; I neither know nor understand what thou sayest. And he went forth before the court ; and the cock crew.*

69. *And again a maid-servant seeing him, began to say to the standers-by : This is one of them.*

70. *But he denied again. And after a while they that stood by said again to Peter : Surely thou art one of them ; for thou art also a Galilean.*

71. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak.*

72. *And immediately the cock crew again. And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said unto him : Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt thrice deny me. And he began to weep.*

COMMENTARY.

1-72. (See Matt. xxvi. 1-75.)

CHAPTER XV.

TEXT.

AND straightway in the morning the chief priests holding a consultation with the ancients and the scribes and the whole council, binding Jesus, led him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

2. *And Pilate asked him : Art thou the king of the Jews ? But he answering, saith to him : Thou sayest it.*

3. *And the chief priests accused him in many things.*

4. *And Pilate again asked him, saying : Answerest thou nothing ? behold in how many things they accuse thee.*

5. *But Jesus still answered nothing ; so that Pilate wondered.*

6. *Now on the festival day he was wont to release unto them one of the prisoners, whomsoever they demanded.*

7. *And there was one called Barabbas, who was put in prison with some seditious men, who in the sedition had committed murder.*

8. *And when the multitude was come up, they began to desire that he would do, as he had ever done unto them.*

9. *And Pilate answered them, and said : Will you that I release to you the king of the Jews ?*

10. *For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him up out of envy.*

11. *But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas to them.*

12. *And Pilate again answering, saith to them : What will you then that I do to the king of the Jews ?*

13. *But they again cried out : Crucify him.*

14. *And Pilate saith to them : Why, what evil hath he done ? But they cried out the more : Crucify him.*

15. *And so Pilate being willing to satisfy the people, released to them Barabbas, and delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.*

16. *And the soldiers led him away into the court of the palace, and they call together the whole band :*

17. *And they clothe him with purple, and plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon him.*

18. *And they began to salute him : Hail, king of the Jews.*

19. *And they struck his head with a reed: And they did spit on him. And bowing their knees, they adored him.*

20. *And after they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own garments on him, and they led him out to crucify him.*

21. *And they forced one Simon a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and of Rufus, to take up his cross.*

22. *And they bring him into the place called Golgotha, which being interpreted is, the place of Calvary.*

23. *And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but he took it not.*

24. *And crucifying him, they divided his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.*

25. *And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.*

26. *And the inscription of his cause was written over, "the King of the Jews."*

27. *And with him they crucify two thieves, the one on his right hand and the other on his left.*

28. *And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith: "And with the wicked he was reputed."*

29. *And they that passed by, blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again:*

30. *Save thyself, coming down from the cross.*

31. *In like manner also the chief priests mocking said with the scribes one to another: He saved others, himself he cannot save.*

32. *Let Christ the king of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him, reviled him.*

33. *And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour.*

34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying: Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabachthani? Which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

35. *And some of the standers-by hearing, said: Behold he calleth Elias.*

36. *And one running and filling a sponge with vinegar, and putting it upon a reed, gave him to drink, saying: Stay, let us see if Elias come to take him down.*

37. *And Jesus having cried out with a loud voice, gave up the ghost.*

38. *And the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom.*

39. *And the centurion who stood over-against him, seeing that crying out in this manner he had given up the ghost, said: Indeed this man was the Son of God.*

40. *And there were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome;*

41. *Who also when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered to him, and many other women that came up with him to Jerusalem.*

42. *And when evening was now come (because it was the Parasceve, that is, the day before the Sabbath),*

43. *Joseph of Arimathea, a noble counsellor, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.*

44. *But Pilate wondered that he should be already dead. And sending for the centurion, he asked him if he were already dead.*

45. *And when he had understood it by the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.*

46. *And Joseph buying fine linen and taking him down, wrapped him up in the fine linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewed out of a rock. And he rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre.*

47. *And Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where he was laid.*

COMMENTARY.

1-47. (See Matt. xxvii. 1-61).

CHAPTER XVI.

ANALYSIS.

In this chapter, the Evangelist describes some circumstances connected with our Lord's resurrection; the pious sedulity of the holy women, who, after having, probably, set out in the dark, arrived only about daybreak on Easter morning at the holy sepulchre, in order to anoint the body of our Lord with the spices purchased for the purpose. The apparition of Angels, whom they saw sitting in the monument, after the stone which caused them such uneasiness had been rolled back, and from whom they received the joyous announcement that our Lord had risen, with instructions to return and announce the joyous tidings to the Apostles, and Peter particularly. With this injunction of the angel, they at once comply, leaving the monument with fear and trembling (1-8). He next describes our Lord's apparition to Magdalen (9-11); to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (12-13); His apparition to the eleven and others when at table in Jerusalem (14). His apparition to them on a mountain of Galilee, when He commanded them to preach the Gospel to the end of time, to the entire world. Finally, His ascension into heaven.

TEXT.

- A**ND when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus.
2. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen.
3. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?
4. And looking, they saw the stone rolled back. For it was very great.
5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe: and they were astonished.
6. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted, you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him.
7. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, as he told you.
8. But they going out, fled from the sepulchre. For a trembling and fear had seized them: and they said nothing to any man; for they were afraid.
9. But he rising early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom he had cast seven devils.
10. She went and told them that had been with him, who were mourning and weeping.
11. And they hearing that he was alive and had been seen by her, did not believe.
12. And after that he appeared in another shape to two of them walking, as they were going into the country.
13. And they going told it to the rest: neither did they believe them.
14. At length he appeared to the eleven as they were at table: and he upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again.
15. And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.
16. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.
17. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues:

18. *They shall take up serpents : and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them : they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.*

19. *And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.*

20. *But they going forth preached every where : the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed.*

COMMENTARY.

1-8. (See Matt. xxviii. 1-8.)

5. On entering into the sepulchre and not finding the body, the pious women were seized with astonishment (Luke xxiv. 4), and immediately after, they were favoured with a vision of Angels, which caused them the greatest terror, so much so, that they were forced to "*bow their countenances towards the ground*" (Luke xxiv. 5). Then, the Angel addressing them in comforting words, calculated to remove the awe with which they were seized said :

6. "*Be not affrighted ; YE seek Jesus of Nazareth.*" Unlike the Jews, who have unjustly compassed His death, and the soldiers appointed to prevent His resurrection, YE come to display your devotionate affection. "*Behold the place where they laid Him,*" as if to say, if you do not believe my words, come forward and believe the empty sepulchre (St. Jerome).

It is to be observed, that the Jewish sepulchres were so constructed, that besides the place where the bodies were immediately deposited, they had also attached to them an outer vaulted enclosure, capable of containing several persons. Hence, the women are said to have "*entered into the sepulchre.*"

The resurrection of our Blessed Lord is suggestive of the most consoling thoughts, and is pregnant with matter for the most serious reflection.—1st. It contains the most convincing proof of our Lord's Divinity. It conveys the most solid proof of His omnipotence, when He raised from the dead, not any one else, but Himself, after having been consigned to the tomb for three days, and after the reality of His death had been placed beyond all dispute, being testified to by His very executioners, when questioned by Pilate; and not only did He raise Himself, but He did so, after having repeatedly predicted beforehand all its circumstances in detail, in consequence of which prediction, universally known at the time, His enemies set a guard to watch His body till after the expiration of the time. This resurrection, then, is the most solid ground-work of our faith. Without it, "*our faith would be vain*" (1 Cor. xv. 14). Therefore, it is, the Apostle says, "*having died for our sins, He rose again for our justification*" (Rom. iv. 25).

2ndly. The resurrection of our Lord, "*the first-fruits of them that sleep*" (1 Cor. xv. 20), is a sure pledge, and earnest, that we shall all rise again with the same bodies we had in this life. "*For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Cor. xv. 21). In truth the greater part of the fifteenth chapter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (See Commentary on) is devoted to the proof of the fundamental doctrine, that we shall all rise again; and as the basis of this, the Apostle proves the resurrection of Christ, with which the general resurrection of all is so intimately connected, that if we suppose the dead not to arise, it follows, neither has Christ arisen. The resurrection of all is, then, one of the fundamental articles of our faith. Why then dwell on the proof of it? It is, because of the practical and solemn reflection of which this great truth is suggestive. We shall rise again, but in

what *condition* shall we rise? Whether shall our bodies rise in a state of glory described by the Apostle (1 Cor. xv. 42-45), or in a state of dishonour; foul, hideous carcasses, only fit for eternal flames? "*Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again; but we shall not all be changed*" (v. 51). Our condition at the resurrection will depend on whether we make the resurrection of Christ from the tomb, the model of our spiritual resurrection from the tomb of sin. Christ's resurrection was perfect, complete; so must ours be. Christ's resurrection was unchangeable and persevering; so must also be our resurrection from the grave of sin. Without this quality of perseverance, everything else is vain. It is a point of Catholic faith, that without "the great gift of final perseverance, we cannot be saved" (Council of Trent, SS. vi., Canons xvi., xxi.); and we have but one means of obtaining this great grace, viz., persevering prayer; "*suppliciter emereri potest*" (St. Augustine). We should, therefore, never cease to pray for this great gift.

7. "*His disciples and Peter.*" Peter was the head of the Apostolic College, and whenever the Apostles are all or in part mentioned with Peter, he is always placed first. There is particular allusion to him here. (See Matt. xxviii.)

9. St. Jerome (Epist. 150, ad Hedibiam 2, 3), and St. Gregory of Nyssa (Orat. 2, de Resurrect.), observe, that the apparition of our Lord to Magdalen, recorded in vv. 9-10-11, is wanting in some of the best Greek copies; and others reject the remainder of the chapter from verse 9 to the end. The reason assigned was, the apparent discrepancy between this passage and St. Matthew, and also the addition of certain words now no longer found there, which savoured of Manicheism, quoted by St. Jerome (Lib. 2, contra Pelagianos). But, no Catholic can now doubt its Canonicity, after the decree of the Council of Trent de Canonicis (SS. 4). (See Commentary on the Epistles, vol. ii., p. 423.) It is quoted from by St. Irenæus (Lib. iii., adv. Heres.); by Tertullian (Lib. de Præscript); by St. Ambrose (Lib. 1, de Fide); St. Augustine (de Consen. Evangel.); Athanasius (in Synopsi); St. Jerome (Lib. 2, contra Pelag.); by St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the very Oration (2aa, de Resurrection), in which he speaks of the closing part of this chapter being wanting in some Greek copies. Theophylact has written a Commentary on it. The apparent discrepancies between St. Mark here and St. Matthew are easily reconciled. Moreover, the discrepancy between St. Matthew and the two other Evangelists, is greater than that between Matthew and Mark in this passage. On *intrinsic* grounds, it would appear that the last words of verse 8, "*for they were afraid,*" could not be the conclusion of St. Mark's Gospel. Such an abrupt termination would be quite unmeaning.

"*But He rising early the first day . . . appeared first to Mary Magdalen,*" &c. St. John (xx. 11-18), more fully describes this apparition to Magdalen and its circumstances. Although Mary Magdalen is the "*first*" to whom our Lord is said, according to the Gospel account, to have appeared, still, it is piously believed, that He appeared to His Virgin Mother first of all after His resurrection, although the Scriptures are silent on this point. This is the opinion of St. Ambrose (Lib. de Virgin.); St. Anselm (Lib. 6, de Excell. Virgin.); St. Bonaventure (in vita Christi); Maldonatus, Suarez, &c. Others, however, are of a contrary opinion, on the ground that our Lord appeared to others for the purpose of strengthening their faith, which the Blessed Virgin did not need. Hence, she did not accompany the other pious women to the sepulchre, nor join in purchasing spices to embalm Him, which she knew to be useless.

"*Out of whom He cast seven devils.*" Some understand these words, of her being freed from gross vices and passions. It is, however, more likely, that there is question of the expulsion of "*seven*," i.e., many "*devils*," who had bodily possession of her, probably in punishment of her former sinful life. To her, as is clear from the Gospels, reference is made (Luke viii. 2), and from the whole context of St. Luke, there can be no doubt, that there is question of demoniacal possession, of which our Redeemer was mercifully pleased to cure her. Her ardent love and gratitude merited for her, to be the first favoured with our Lord's apparition, so that "*where sin abounded, grace superabounded.*"

Some expositors (St. Jerome, Theophylact, Euthymius), would place a comma after "*rising*," and connect the following words, "*early the first day of the week*," with, "*appeared to Mary Magdalen.*" For, they hold, that if it were connected with "*early the first day*," &c., it would place, beyond all dispute, the precise hour of our Lord's rising, which is uncertain.

But, as Jansenius Gand. (c. 145), observes, this would not necessarily follow, as the Greek for "*rising*" (*anastas*), signifies, "*after He had risen*," which would leave the precise time uncertain. It seems, however, most probable, that the words, "*rising early*," should be connected with the words, "*the first day of the week.*" The other construction, besides being somewhat harsh, would render it uncertain whether He might not have appeared to others before Magdalen, in the interval between His rising and the early part of Sunday, when He appeared to her.

10, 11. This announcement is mentioned (John xx. 18). She came and told His disciples, sorrowing over the death of their Lord; and as they disbelieved her and others about the vision of Angels, so are they also incredulous regarding our Lord's apparition, which served ultimately to confirm our faith. They tacitly charge her with taking a phantom for a reality. "*Hoc enim eorum incredulitas, non tam eorum infirmitas quam nostra futura firmitas fuit*" (St. Gregory, Hom. 29 in Evangel.)

12. This apparition is the same as that mentioned by St. Luke, which was made to the two disciples as they were proceeding, on Easter day, to the town of Emmaus, which was about sixty furlongs from Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 13, &c.) This was the fourth time our Lord appeared on Easter day—1st. To Magdalen, at the tomb. 2nd. To her and the women, on their return to Jerusalem (Matt. xxviii. 9). 3rd. To Peter (Luke xxiv. 34). 4th. Here, "*in another shape*," which seemed to them different from His usual appearance.

13. "*Neither did they believe them.*" The words, "*Neither did they believe*," could not be understood, strictly, of all present, viz., "*the eleven and those that were with them*" (Luke xxiv. 33). For, the assembled eleven, and the other disciples who were with them, were speaking of our Lord's apparition to Peter, on the entrance of the two (Luke xxiv. 34). They could not, then, be incredulous in regard to what the two disciples came back to tell them, in corroboration of our Lord's resurrection. The words mean, the Apostles and disciples were so overjoyed at the tidings, that they could hardly bring themselves to believe such joyous news. If they did not *believe*, they could not have rejoiced; it was their belief, and the excess of their joy, that produced *unbelief*, in the sense explained; or, if the words be taken strictly, then they are true only of some who were present (Maldonatus, A. Lapide).

14. This is our Lord's fifth apparition on Easter day. St. Thomas was not there, but they are called "*eleven*," this being the number that, since the perfidy and sad end of Judas, constituted the Apostolic College (see 1 Cor. xv. 5, Commentary on).

"*At length*," only means, that this was the last apparition on Easter day. For this apparition is clearly the same as that mentioned in Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 19, &c. He afterwards appeared before His ascension. St. Mark is the only one of the Evangelists who says the Apostles were at table when our Lord appeared. Very likely, they were assembled in some place, probably the supper hall, where our Lord instituted the Eucharist. They had shut themselves in, with the doors closed, for fear of the Jews (John xx. 19).

"*And He upbraided them with their incredulity, because they did not believe them who had seen Him*," &c., viz., Magdalen, Peter, and the two disciples of Emmaus. This must have reference only to some of those present. On His entrance, He saluted them with the words, "*Peace be to you; it is I, fear not*" (Luke xxiv. 36). He then showed His hands and His feet, called for food, giving every proof of the reality of His person; and after that reproached them, or some of them, with their incredulity in not believing those who saw Him after He was risen again. This, however, He did to impress them more and more with the truth of His resurrection.

15. "*And He said to them: Go ye into the whole world*," &c. These words were spoken by our Lord, not on the occasion referred to in the preceding verse, but when He met them afterwards on a mountain in Galilee (see Matt. xxviii.; p. 593 Commentary). Our Lord now commissions His Apostles, and arms them with full authority to go forth and "*preach the Gospel to every creature*" under heaven, without let or hindrance from any earthly power; to go forth as His immediate representatives, deriving their power directly and immediately from Him, and from no one else, who is the Sovereign Lord and Creator of the universe, to whom belongs the earth and its fulness, by whom kings reign and lawgivers decree justice. He is to be ever with them. Whosoever opposes them opposes Him and His Divine ordinances. Woe to those who oppose Him in them. "*For, whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder*" (Matt. xxi. 44).

16. "*He that believeth*." What? Surely, the Gospel they are empowered to preach, and believeth with a lively faith, joined with good works, "*observing all things He commands*" (Matt. xxviii. 20). "*And is baptized, shall be saved*." This, like every affirmative proposition, means, provided there be no other obstacle (see p. 594). "*But he that believeth not*," the Gospel preached by the Apostles and their legitimate successors, "*shall be condemned*," it matters not whether he be rich or poor, learned or unlearned, young or old, king or subject. Infallible truth is pledged to it. The Judge of the living and the dead has decreed it. The Saviour of all mankind has made it an indispensable condition for all, in order to be partakers of the fruits of His Redemption, that they must have faith—faith conceived only from the preaching of those legitimately sent. If the preaching of others would suffice to engender faith, why should the preaching of the Apostles be necessary to reach every creature? On this account it is, the Apostle tells us, that while faith comes from hearing, it is from hearing those only who are legitimately sent. To those alone who have a legitimate mission from the Apostles, and their successors in God's Church, can the words apply: "*How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace; of them that bring glad tidings of good things*" (Rom. x. 15, see Commentary on).

Our Lord does not add here the second member, "*and is not baptized;*" because, baptism may, in some extraordinary circumstances, be dispensed with, as in the case of martyrdom for the *faith*; or in the case of perfect contrition, when there is question of a catechumen ardently desiring for baptism, that cannot be administered; or, in the case of an infant in the womb of a mother, martyred for the faith. In such cases, baptism of water may be dispensed with. But faith, when there is question of rational adults, *never*.

17. "*And these signs shall follow,*" &c. He calls miracles, *signs*, or proofs of the doctrine which they wrought to establish. This He adds, to remove any feeling of diffidence which illiterate fishermen might have, in preaching, to a world sunk in sin, the self-denying doctrines of the Cross; to a world elated with the fame of science and philosophy, the incomprehensible mysteries of faith. "*Shall follow,*" as if to say, the operation of these miracles shall be the work of God. "*Those who believe,*" as far as God may deem it expedient, and as it may be useful or necessary for the purposes intended, namely, the propagation of the Gospel, and strengthening men in the faith. This does not imply that this miraculous power was to be ordinarily conferred on each individual among the faithful; but, as it was a power given for the public good of the faithful, it was only to be given to some persons, and in *such measure*, as God would be pleased to bestow it. It is promised indefinitely to the believers, because given to some, for the benefit of all, and hence, may be said to be given to all. In the beginning of the Church, it was very commonly given to the faithful (Justin Martyr, Dial. contra Typhon; Tertullian, in Apol. Lactantius; also Acts x.; xix. 6). Then it was more necessary in order to propagate and confirm the faith. For, as irrigation is necessary for young plants, and afterwards is given over; so was it with the usual exercise of the gifts of miracles after the first ages (St. Gregory, Homil. in hunc locum; St. Augustine, Lib. de Vera Relig. chap. 25). But after the Apostolic age, and the age of Martyrs, who had to cope with tyrants, such powers were confined to only a few, who from time to time have always exercised, in defence of truth, a power permanently residing in God's Church, where it is occasionally manifested, in proof of the unsullied purity of her doctrine, and the sanctity of her children.

"*In My name,*" by invoking the power and authority of Christ. "*Cast out devils,*" frequently exercised by our Lord Himself, who came to overcome the devil. "*Shall speak with new tongues,*" which they never learned (Acts ii.)

18. "*Take up serpents,*" hold in their hands venomous animals, without suffering injury therefrom, as happened St. Paul (Acts xxviii. 3-6).

"*Drink any deadly thing,*" accidentally, or forced by tyrants and wicked men to do so. Our Lord only mentions some of the miraculous powers left with His Church, because, these had reference to what were of common occurrence. The Apostles exercised ampler powers still, even in the raising of the dead (Acts ix. 40). Some of these miraculous powers were to be exercised by certain persons, some by others (1 Cor. xii. 4-30).

19. "*After He had spoken to them,*" for forty days after His resurrection, treating of the kingdom of God.

"*Was taken up into heaven,*" by the power of His Father, which was also His own. Acts of power, though common to the Trinity, are, by *appropriation*, attributed to God the Father, just as it is said, "*God raised Him up*" (Acts ii. 24). St. Luke (xxiv. 50;

Acts i. 9-12), describes His ascension as having taken place near Bethania, on Mount Olivet.

"*Sitteth at the right hand of God*," a metaphorical phrase, conveying, that He, as man, occupies in heaven the place next to God in glory and majesty. He *sits*. The angels *stand* in His presence. Sitting at the *right hand* of the Father, does not imply superiority to the Father, as, with us, in modern times, the superior is placed at the right hand. For, in ancient times, those who sat at the left occupied a more honourable place than those placed at the right, contrary to ideas that prevail at present.

20. "*Preached everywhere*," or, in the chief places, best known throughout the globe, among Jews and Gentiles, without distinction. This they did, not immediately, but after the coming down of the Holy Ghost.

"*The Lord working withal*," by the abundant infusion of His *interior* grace. "*And confirming*," externally, "*the Word*," which, armed with a legitimate mission, they preached to every creature. "*With signs which followed*," with miracles, the seal of their authority, and of the truth of what they preached, a *seal*, still retained in God's Church, occasionally exhibited when He deems it necessary for the confirmation of truth, or the proof of the sanctity of His servants. A seal, however, which is confined to God's Church, to the legitimate successors of the Apostles, to which no heretical or schismatical Church could ever have any pretension; and which they therefore, deride, and make the subject of infidel jeers and bitter taunts, when exhibited in the Church of the living God.

GLORIA PATRI, ET FILIO, ET SPIRITUI SANCTO.

QUEEN, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN,
ST. JOSEPH, FOSTER FATHER OF THE SON OF GOD, } Pray for us.

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